

SPECTRUM

ISSUE 5

AMBIENT/INDUSTRIAL/EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC CULTURE MAGAZINE

BRIGHTER DEATH NOW/ CROWD CONTROL ACTIVITIES
DEATH IN JUNE/ FOLKSTORM/ HOUSE OF LOW CULTURE
IRM/ MIDDLE PILLAR PRESENTS/ NOVY SVET
SKINCAGE/ SPECTRE/ TRIBE OF CIRCLE/ VOX BARBARA

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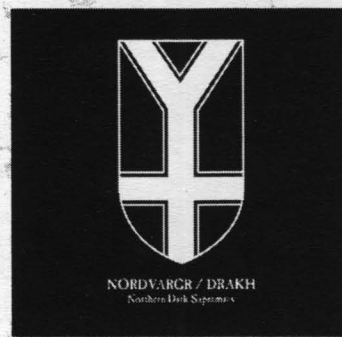
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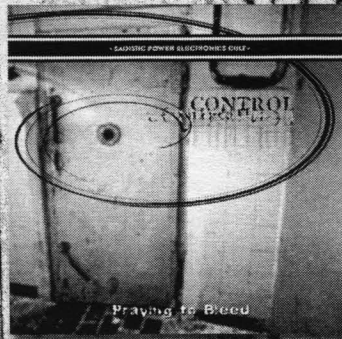
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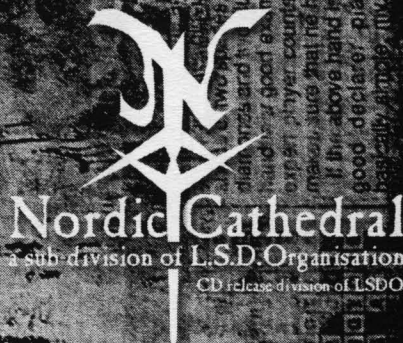


7" Control - Praying to Bleed



7" Dodsdomd
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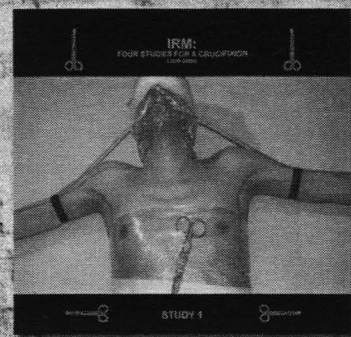
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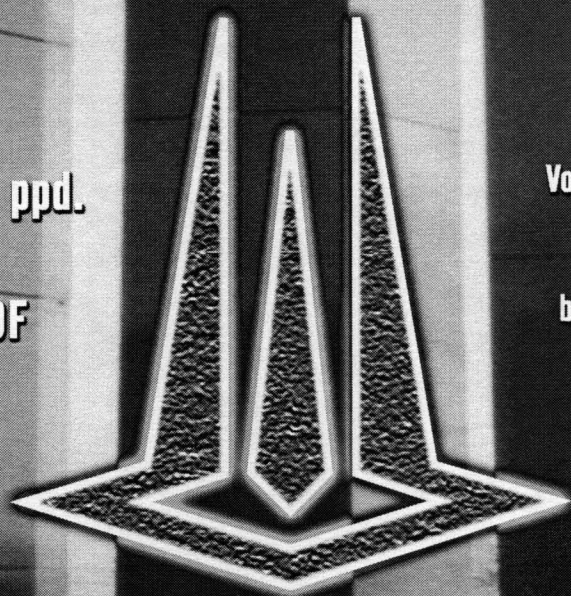
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TRIUMVIRATE

APPROACHING>

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VoS [solo project of S. Hall/Yen Pox]

Autumn 2001:

NOTHING, restructured

by M. Hensley [Yen Pox/Blood Box],

graphix by S. Candey

[Crionic Mind/Gruntsplatter]

Winter 2001:

RADIAL

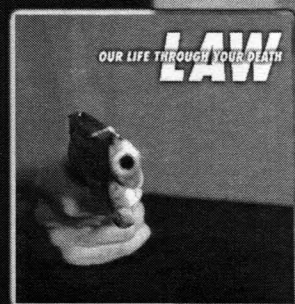
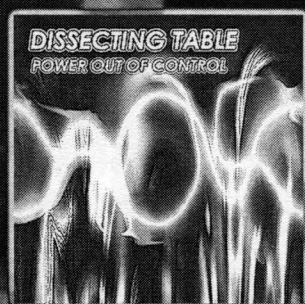
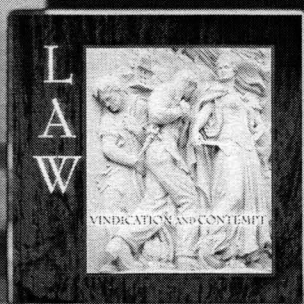
[hard rhythms,
harsh frequencies]

LAW

DISSECTING TABLE

VEINKE

LAW



SPECTRUM MAGAZINE ISSUE 5: EDITORIAL MAY 2001

Well, what to say? Hmmmm...basically if you read the editorial in last issue you might remember that I was not sure to if Spectrum 5# would arrive sooner or later, as this essentially hinged on my probable European travels. Anyway as you can obviously see, Issue 5# has materialised, basically caused by two factors: (being) 1: a partial delay in my anticipated departure date, and 2: a personal character flaw of needing to be continually stressed with workloads and publication deadlines! Thus, on one hand the new issue is presented for your reading pleasure, however on the other hand Spectrum 6# will definitely be put on hold for an extended length of time, given my flight is booked and my travels through England and Europe are at this point for an indefinite period. Most importantly I look forward to visiting the countries, monuments, galleries, sites, locations etc that so much of the music covered in Spectrum derive inspiration from, and who knows, if I have been in contact with some of you European dwellers throughout Spectrum's short history, you might just expect me to come a knocking on your door for a visit! Not much else to say from here as Spectrum 5# already goes beyond the call in expressing its share. Until next time...whenever that may be...

O'vr'n out.....end transmission.....

-Richard Stevenson

EDITOR - INTERVIEWER - REVIEWER - LAYOUT DESIGNER ETC: RICHARD STEVENSON

CONTRIBUTORS: JC SMITH - REVIEWS/ CHRIS FORTH & JOSEPH AQUINO - REVIEW SECTION PROOF READING.

Greetings and thanks:

To all artists/ individuals who donated their time in providing interviews. Labels, distributors & shops who have thus far supported this publication via providing promotional items, advertisements and stocking copies (your collective input and support in invaluable and particular gratitude is extended to Jason Mantis and Phil Easter @ Malignant Records). JC Smith for continued input. Chris Forth & Joseph Aquino for thoughts and suggestions. Mick Stevenson for technical computer assistance. Lastly, friends and family for interest (enveloped in bemusement and intrigue).

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S P E C T R U M M A G A Z I N E @ H O T M A I L . C O M

"The pale autumn sky was filled with the exodus of millions of leaves, deported by the wind to distant corners of the city, away from the branches which had once given life. Here and there, stone faced men worked with slow concentration to control this arboreal diaspora, burning the dead from ash, oak, elm, beech, sycamore, maple, horse-chestnut, lime and weeping willow, the acrid grey smoke hanging in the air like the last breath of lost souls. But always there were more, and more still, so that the burning middens seemed never to grown any smaller, and as I stood and watched the glowing embers of the fires, and breathed the hot gas of deciduous death, it seemed I could taste the very end of everything".

Phillip Kerr: The Pale Criminal 1990

The cover image consists of two source photographs taken by: Jon Ray (aka: Skincage) and further manipulated into the final image by: Richard Stevenson.

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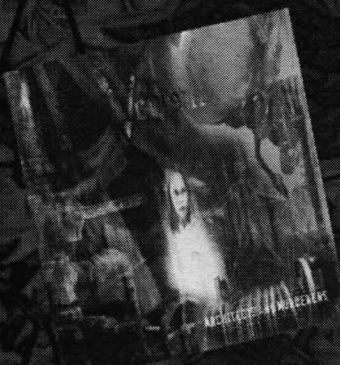
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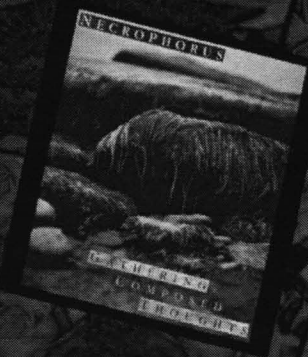


Vedisni - Architects and Murderers

Intensely dark ambient/industrial with harsh noise influences and eerie voices, recitations, and invocations. Vedisni have created one of the darkest ambient releases ever pressed to CD. Not for the timid.

Necrophorous - Gathering Composed Thoughts

From the mind of Peter Andersson (Raison d'Être). A collection of dark minimal soundscapes, eerie ambient tracks, and soaring neoclassical passages. Another great release from a pioneer in dark ambient/neoclassical music.

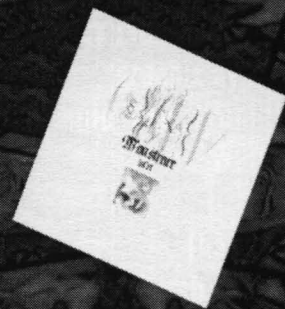


LS-TTL - el es tee tee el

An abstract project ranging from electronic and ambient to industrial and noise. LS-TTL balance harsh noise passages with more subdued, brooding ambience, creating astounding soundscapes

Monstrare - IsFet

Fearsome, creeping minimal ambient/black industrial. Rumbles and drones, distorted voices, and an overall atmosphere that will send chills through your spine. This will leave you looking over your shoulder...



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Tribe of Circle

With Tribe of Circle making their public debut in 2000 with a 7" ep on Hau Ruk, followed soon after with a full length CD on Athanor, I can say I was rather impressed with their style. By virtue of taking the looped based industrial structure of Deutsch Nepal and mixing it with the martial and neo-classic style of Der Blutharsch, Tribe of Circle have certainly created a rather impressive and epic sound. Solo member Jean-Paul Antelmi provided counsel in regards to the circumstances of his project.

Tribe of Circle would seem to be a relatively new project with only a 7" and CD released thus far. What details can you provide of your musical background both before and up to the formation of Tribe of Circle? In fact, the project TOC exists for many years now, but it has evolved a lot concerning the line-up. At the beginning TOC was composed of a few members, but as i was the only one to compose, to create the project and since human relationship within the band was not good at all, we parted and i stayed alone with my long cherished project!!! So i've been playing alone for 6 years now in TOC, but as you know, my first official productions were released last year, because i felt ready to perform & assume my task.

Your debut 7"ep was released on Albin Julius's label Hau Ruk. How did you come to be in touch with Albin that lead to this Tribe of Circle release? When i decided to send some demos to labels, i wanted in the same time to send some of them to artists whose work i really appreciated...one of these artists was Albin and he liked it at once. Then he offered me to release a limited vinyl to begin. And so to speak, nothing could separate us now!!!

After the debut 7"ep, your debut CD was released not on Hau Ruk but rather on the rising cult French label Athanor. What were the circumstances of this change of label and was there any interest from Hau Ruk to issue the debut CD? As i just told you, the original idea with HauRuk! was to release a limited item only. Meanwhile Athanor offered me to release my first full length album cd. I had just accepted the Athanor's proposition when Albin finally asked me the same. As i had given my word to Stéphane (Athanor), i took the decision to release the 1st album with Stéphane, and the second one with Albin which was well accepted on each side! But, as Albin really loved one of my songs (called «Altered State»), i have taken it out from the cd, and kept it aside for the 7inch on HauRuk!

Various loops clearly make up the majority of your compositions (both of industrial and neo-classical focus), however how much is Tribe of Circle a programmed and sample based project? With clearly audible elements of percussion etc do you play any of the instrumentation yourself or is it again sampled? In regard to the more classically and vocally oriented samples where do you derive these from? As i am alone, my music is definitely based on samples and loops...However, it is not a staunch will to work in this way; to me, it is the best way to work. Indeed, i sometimes sample myself using percussions, vocals, fx, etc. But i'd really appreciate to work

with a few instrumentalists. As you certainly know, playing alone brings as many advantages as it can bring the contrary. Anyway, the means is not important to me, the essential is to be able to express what i feel inside, so that the listeners may feel the same!

With no lyrics being present within your compositions how much could the track titles be viewed potentially as propaganda? Do these titles reflect the intention of feeling that you derive from the music or the idea your attempt to embody in the composition? Which comes first music or title? I do not and i will never make any propaganda! I have already said it before but i prefer to repeat it once again... TOC is not made to teach anything or force people to think in a certain way, but rather make people have a reflection on certain subjects. Above all, suggestion is better than ready-made truths! As the music, the titles suggest ideas and are as many guidelines. I do not agree with your words «no lyrics present», because there is a difference between a few lyrics, and no lyrics at all... Sometimes there is only one sentence or two in a track, but it exactly represents the essence and the meaning of it. As a matter of fact, the result does not lie in the quantity but rather in the quality. To answer to your last question, sometimes the music speaks for itself, so the title is revealed by it; but sometimes, particularly when i want to express myself about a precise subject, the title comes first...there are no rules!!

A track off the debut CD is entitled "Evil is a state of mind". For me this would indicate an ironic slant, however the dialogue sample contained within this track specifically references the track's title (reflecting on the nature of evil in comparison to the actions of God). Firstly what is your view of my alternate interpretation? Also does the use of this dialogue sample point to anti-Christian sentiments that you might hold? For your guidance, the title in question is not entitled "Evil is a state of mind", but "Evil is a point of view" what includes many semantic differences!! So i can't answer as well as i would like to in regard to your alternate question. Nevertheless, my view of it is that evil is perceived differently according to many factors, like the period in which one lives, the culture, the religious beliefs, the moral context, etc. Obviously, one tries to feel less responsible, and God (whatever Christian or not) is the best excuse to perform this task. So the spoken words in this track are to me very well adapted to this concept !! Of course, i could debate on this subject more than that, but i think the previous sentence is the best summary for a so much delicate question!!

Given your music could be said to contain a Euro centric focus, including the use of runes within your imagery, what are your thoughts on the often misinterpretation that the use of such ideas/elements equals a fascistic intent due to the previous appropriation of such themes by the Third Reich? This subject has been debated for long, and i think it is far from ending... All of us are influenced by the culture in which we live; Actually in each culture, the use of symbols is important, and History can change the meaning of them, as it was the case during the Third Reich. For my part, i make a clear distinction between my personal use of Runes and the one that was made during this dark period. The Swastika is for me, one of the most beautiful existing symbols, in its primary meaning, as for the symbol of Sigil; **BUT** do not misjudge about these words: as you certainly know, these symbols have been existing for thousands of years, and within a few years they became the darkest, the most negative and outrageous signs ever. For me, this often misinterpretation is due to a lack of culture, but even without that, it is understandable that people have wanted to forget that these symbols have been positive one day.

Do the use of runes hold the keys to the themes and intentions behind Tribe of Circle? Likewise is there any meaning inherent in the symbolism of your swirling circular logo? The whole concept of Tribe Of Circle is based on the one of DUALITY, whether for Man, the Universe or anything else. In this view, we can actually compare this to the use of Runes, because the latter carry Duality in themselves, without any judgement of values, positive or negative, even if it is mirrored. The logo of TOC is conceived on the same idea, adding the concept of circularity, in concordance with the fact that in the Universe, everything tends to be circular.

With a quote on the CD cover stating "From Hope to Loyalty...From Strength to Victory!", this is rather an ambiguous statement that could almost be interpreted in anyway an individual could see fit depending on their agenda. Do you want to divulge any of your

personal reasons for utilising a slogan that in essence could be used to misrepresent yourself/Tribe of Circle? Just try to recognize yourself within these words, perhaps you'll feel the same as me, or a different interpretation. Anyway, i think that «hope» and «loyalty» are two values which express very well what i'm looking for in life, amongst others of course, such as respect, honour, integrity, and all these things that make us feel more humane, and certainly what we miss the most today!! Without hope, you can only survive...without loyalty, you're alone!!

Given that your music has a central framework of neo-classical sounds, how much does history interest you as opposed to the modern world? There is no opposition, History has made us what we are today. My use of neo-classical sounds is not made to represent certain periods of History, it's just a matter of personal taste.

Not wanting to jump to conclusions to who may be sampled on the last track of your CD it is still a rather vitriolic speech being conducted in German. Who is it that is sampled and what was the intention of the inclusion of what seems to be rather a provocative dialogue sample? I see what you're getting at...The title of this track carries in itself all its meaning, but as it is in French, i could understand that you missed the sense of it...this title is «Rien ne disparaît jamais vraiment», which means in English «Nothing ever really disappears»...that's why the sentence in it is so «vitriolic».

In the liner notes of your debut Douglas P is given a mention of special regards. Was this greeting included as mere appreciation of his music works as Death in June or is there something deeper? Maybe is the same for you, as for me, some periods in my life are linked to the music i was listening at the time. I know DJ's music for more than 10 years now and, of course, it counts a lot. Beyond the music, the texts of Douglas have always been present and essential, like a permanent support. If there was a person to whom i wanted to pay homage, Douglas P. was this person.

Who would hold as comrades in the musical path that you are currently marching on? What music interests you both in reference to and away from Tribe of Circle? My musical

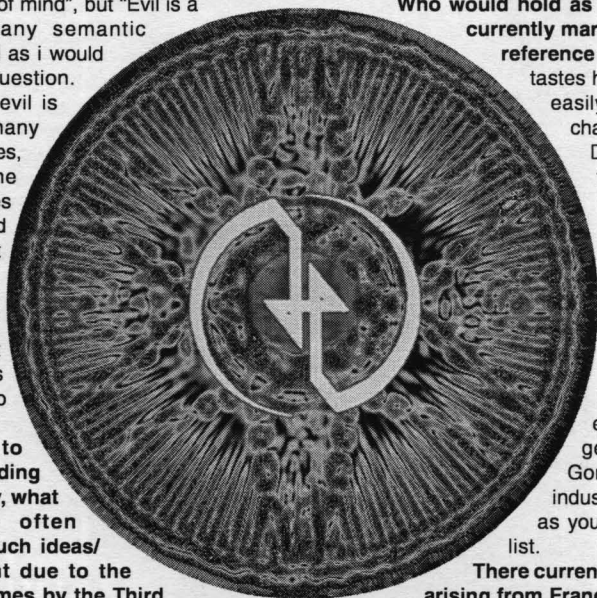
tastes have many horizons...As a matter of fact, i can easily listen an old Napalm Death one hour, and change it to Jacques Brel the other one!! Except DJ (which is «unclassifiable» with other bands for me) i really like bands like Der Blutharsch, LJDLP or Arcana, even if i don't listen a lot of industrial music (!!??). I have recently discovered an excellent Russian band called L.C, which have already released some cd-r and one first official album (i think). I have a really high respect for ALL the work of Lisa Gerrard, with DCD or her solo works (except collaborations with Peter Bourke). The «Mirror Pool» is one of the most great Masterpiece i've ever heard. But the most of times, i like to listen genius composers like Penderecki, Schnittke, Gorecki, Arvo Part or Ligeti, but i can listen as well indusmetal bands like Kill the Thrill, Neurosis,... So as you can see, it's a very large and non-exhaustive list.

There currently seems to be a growing number of projects arising from France to prominence and notoriety. Is there any sort of focus to the French scene or is it essentially fragmented into groupings of individual interests? I don't know. I have not a lot of contacts with other French bands, except for Erik (LJDLP), Alberto (NothvsFiliusMortis) and Thierry (ex-Exotoendo). But i'm very amazing about the quality of some french projects like Asmorod, Regard Extreme or Etant donné (i certainly forgot some others). I'd really liked to have more contacts with other French bands, but to answer to your question, i think that a few bands have some grouped interests, but with individual methods!!!

In that the tracks off your debut were recorded between June 1998 and December 1999, does this mean that there is wealth of new material ready for imminent release? What upcoming musical movements are you currently involved in? Do you have a spy in your team??!! Yes, you're absolutely right, the new album is musically finished, i'm working on the artwork for the layout right now, and i'm doing some little arrangements on certain tracks...It's the first time i'm really satisfy of my entire work at 100%!! For me, it's the best music i've ever made so.... I have no date about its release for now, but just ask to Albin, he certainly have his idea. I hope to have it around April/May, it depend of the Hau Ruck schedule too!! Meanwhile, TOC will appear on 2 forthcoming compilations: the 1st with Oktagon Records entitled «Audacia Imperat», and the 2nd for a «Tribute To C.Z.Codreanu»....In the furthest future, i'll make a 10inch on Athanor (surprise!!!) and a Vinyl Edition on Malignant records for a retrospective of the 20st century.

Last statements? I'd like to thank you very much, Richard and all the Spectrum team, for your interest in TOC and for your patience in waiting my answers!!!! I hope to see you all in TOC future live performances (no dates yet), and to visit your beautiful country one day....Enjoy life, take care, and be yourself!!

«From Hope to Loyalty...From Strength to Victory!»



For anyone who has heard Novy Svet, I gather on first listens that you might have been scratching your head in bemusement akin to my reaction. After the initial shock of the unusual style abated, (that I have incidentally described in reviews as ranging from drunken accordion folk. to jazz/ folk infused lounge and finally to ritual industrial) the hypnotic elixir that are the compositions have really captured something special – even if I can't entirely grasp in words what that special something is! Here an interview is presented with the male half (j.weber) of the musical duo.

What (and when) were the circumstances of the formation of Novy Svet? the group novy svet as it exists now was born in 1.997. before that both fri. Tost and me were in another loose and nameless project that experimented with different styles of non-traditional/non-conventional musical forms. this band which consisted of some more people split up due to personal problems and some questions of musical directions. we were very much into bruitism and noise that we wanted to combine with our other obsession folk music. the rest of the group moved to a more punk orientated style. after a break of some months we started to make music again, bought our own equipment and recorded loads of songs. some of those make up 'rumorarmonio', our debut lp, although we never thought to release anything or work on that semi-professional basis we do now.

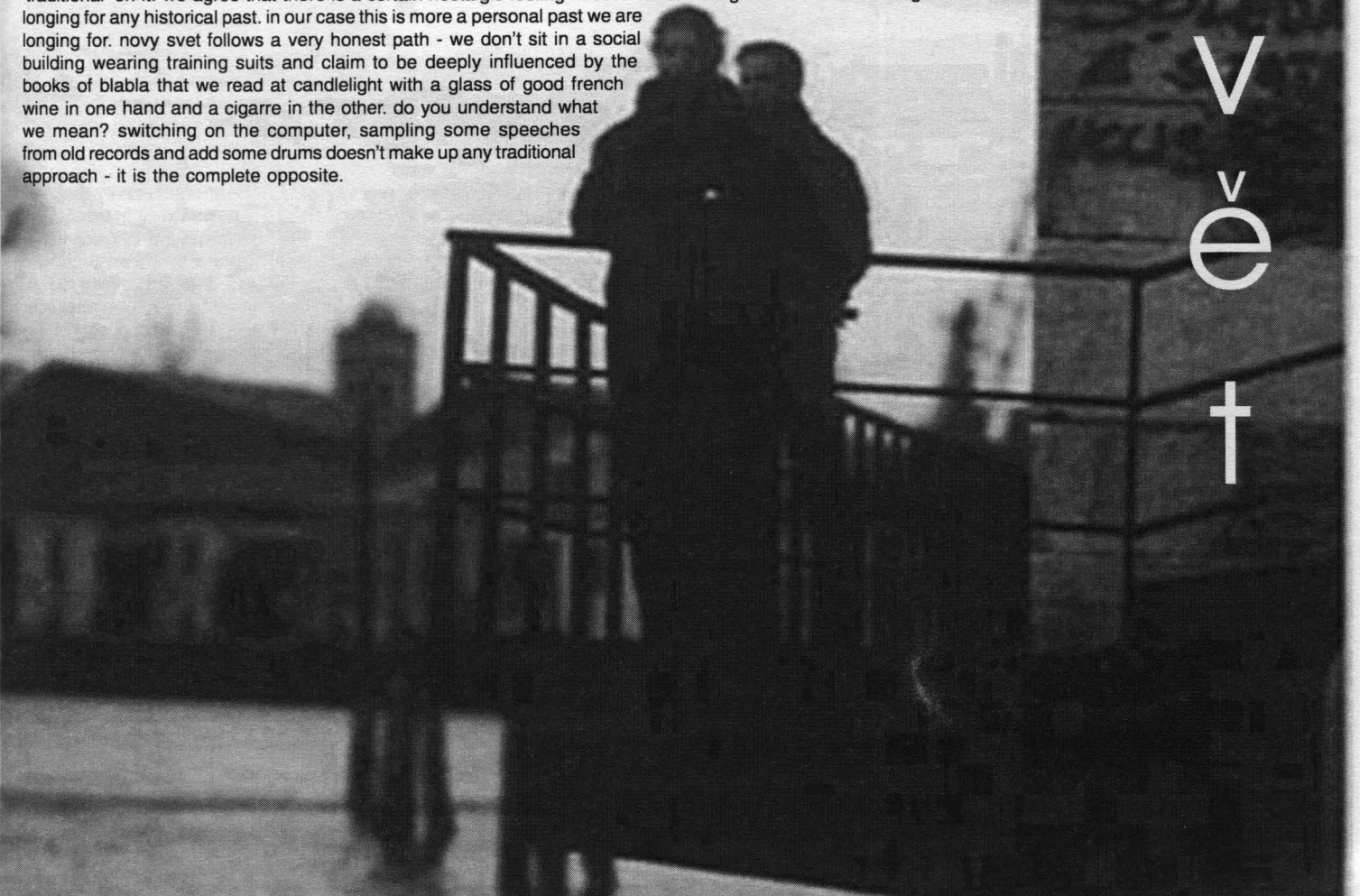
As Novy Svet sounds very different to any other project that I can think of (due to the distillation of traditional folk influence with more modern industrial loop base structure), it has enabled you to highlight parallels with the neo-folk scene yet being leagues apart. Did you always have visions of creating such bizarre but compelling music? well, we never planned to make especially 'bizarre' music. we don't feel like our music is that 'out of the world' as many people claim. we just record what spouts out of us and never thought about any audience. Still today we just do what we like to do and don't care that our output is accidentally distributed in the so-called 'industrial scene' in which's limited musical frame novy svet for sure is a bizarre diamond. we would feel as fine on a worldmusic-label or anywhere else. it is just that many people have problems with topics that we touch and can't / don't want to follow our thoughts.

I believe that Novy Svet is meant to translate to "New World" in Czechoslovakian. Does this group moniker hint and a philosophy or world view embodied within your music? indeed the group's name means 'new world'. we liked the sound of the czech phrase and of course also the idea that a new world is definitely a 'no' to the world as it is now. there is no philosophy or ideology we follow. in fact our aim is to smash all ideology and all idiocy...in real life, not in music. music doesn't change anything. we are happy if we reach some people who listen to our records and afterwards don't feel as solitary as before. I personally believe that music is the strongest of all arts but in most cases people don't permit anything to pass through the thick walls they have built up around themselves.

Given the folk orientation of you sound I would assume you consider your selves culturally aware, therefore what European cultures collectively interest you? From this perspective do Novy Svet embrace or reject the modern world? Also in your exploration of the folk elements of your sound (and therefore being representative of the past) is Novy Svet regressive in philosophy or do you study the past in order to gain an understanding of your personal direction towards the future? we always felt that both the adjectives 'modern' and 'european' fit very well to our work. if 'modern world' means to speed up communication between different people with different backgrounds or to jump into an aeroplane and get wherever you want this is absolutely great. but if 'modern world' means political lies, suffering humans, animals and nature, stupidity and senselessness then it is something that should be fought and destroyed. unfortunately it seems as if the negative aspects within the term 'modern world' exceed the good things. but we have to point out that we wish to reach a status behind post-modernism and not before. so, all those pseudo-traditional movements that are followed by teenagers in uniform don't mean anything to us. musical wise we never looked back but neither we denied our geographical and traditional background. we never understood why people put us into one big sack with the label 'traditional' on it. we agree that there is a certain nostalgic feeling in some of our songs but this has nothing to do with a longing for any historical past. in our case this is more a personal past we are longing for. novy svet follows a very honest path - we don't sit in a social building wearing training suits and claim to be deeply influenced by the books of blabia that we read at candlelight with a glass of good french wine in one hand and a cigarre in the other. do you understand what we mean? switching on the computer, sampling some speeches from old records and add some drums doesn't make up any traditional approach - it is the complete opposite.

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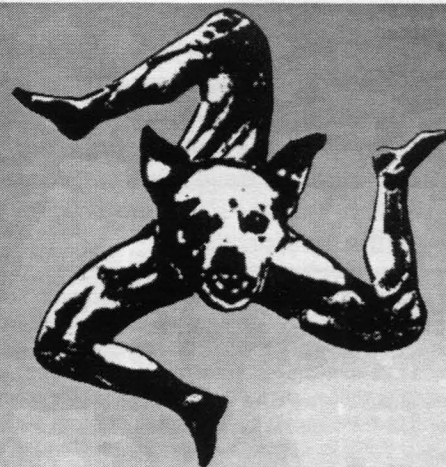


What other music, literature, concepts or otherwise do you drawn upon to gain inspiration for Novy Svet compositions? the main influence for our music is our every day life and the contact to the people we love. artistic influences come from everywhere, especially from visual arts and literature, not that much from music although we both listen to music a lot. Given that Novy Svet are signed to Hau Ruk - Albin Julius's (aka Der Bluthasch) label, how did you to be involved with this label? I am assuming that both projects having their roots in Wein had something to do with this? hahaha, yes both projects have their roots in 'Wein' which means 'wine' in German (ED: damn miss-spelling...I meant to say Wient!). no, to become serious again: novy svet's roots are more into beer and vienna. Albin Julius also lives here although he originates from the far west of austria. we know Albin for quite a long time now. first we met at a party when he was still in TMLHBAC. we established friendship and when he listened to our music for the first time he was totally enthusiastic about it and asked us if we were interested in releasing something on a new label he wanted to start. this was HAU RUCKI.

If I am not mistaken three individuals played on 'faccica a faccia' yet only two on 'cuori di petrolio'. Who are the full time members of Novy Svet and what are the roles in instrumentation and vocalisation? novy svet consists of two people who are the tough center of the group. this is frl. tost and myself. we are the only ones who have worked on every release so far. the rest of the line up changes from recording to recording. if we have problems with realizing a musical phrase or need an additional vocalist we ask one of our friends to join us. each album needs a certain number of people to be produced. for example 'cuori di petrolio' is a very isolationist album both regarding the music but also the way we have recorded it. there wouldn't have been any place for someone else during the recording process. in general both members bring in ideas that we then arrange together and put into a certain structure. most of the songwriting is done by myself - the same goes for lyrics - whilst frl. tost is in charge of the arrangements, the instrumentation and the mix. our method of working is changing from album to album, from song to song. everyone takes the instrument he/she wants to play and then we start.

With the general lack of female presence within the collective music underground, do you consider that having a central female figure within Novy Svet has had a great deal of influence on sound and direction? Also, despite the male vocals are currently a highly characteristic element of your sound and atmosphere, will there be female vocals employed on future recordings? it has no influence at all that we have one female half. it is strange but obvious that novy svet is a very male project. of course we both agree with the contents of the lyrics but they are written from a very masculine point of view (it may sound a bit odd but i would also say that the music is very 'male') which of course doesn't mean that there won't be any vocal's by frl. tost in the future...well, there'll be a song we've recorded together with our friends of CIRCUS JOY that also features her on vocals besides others.

Apart from having three full length Novy Svet albums out (1 LP & 2 CD's), you have released quite a number of limited vinyls. What is your view of vinyl being a collector's item and the common accusation that labels deliberately limit such items to low print runs? some releases are produced for many people, others for not that many. the vinyl releases by novy svet and the releases of the label we run, THE NEKOFUTSCHATA



MUSICK CABARET, are all very special and directed at a special audience. well, of course we would like that everybody who is interested can listen to all our releases but this is utopic anyway. we will go on doing vinyl-only productions. now it seems as we will put out a complete album named 'chappaqua' on limited vinyl only.

Talking of limited vinyl there was a split Der Blutharsch/ Novy Svet 7" (in a ridiculously limited edition of 99 copies), that was incidentally meant to coincide with a double bill live performance in December 2000, however this event was cancelled prior to it ever eventuating. Can you give us some details of the background details that lead to the cancellation of the event? the concert in Trieste was cancelled because of 'political' problems. it was neither the right place nor the right date regarding that this weekend, as a huge neo nazi meeting took place there. well, possibly we could have gained another hundreds of new fans there...but we are not very keen on these people whose ideology is stupidity. we have not cancelled the show. we would have played there but Albin and the organisation have cancelled the concert out of different reasons.

Likewise I have been lead to believe that this cancelled show was meant to be your first live performance. How difficult is it and/or would it be playing Novy Svet material live given both the complexities of your material and extent of instrumentation used, particularly with limited members? once we have played at a private party of a friend but we never did a bigger show. of course there would be more people than frl. tost and me involved in a live performance which's form would depend on the venue we are playing. right now we have several offers from all over europe to play but we plan to do only one live show in our whole career and this should take place in italy...or it should bring us lots of money.

In that you use numerous languages within Novy Svet (Spanish, Italian, English, French and German) why do you choose to present multi-lingual vocals and do you consider that there are advantages inherent in the atmosphere each presents? Could it be construed that via the use of different languages you are attempting to illustrate different viewpoints of the European spirit? there is no rational decision why to use this or that language. this comes naturally to me when i write lyrics. it is more that each song needs a certain language or a mix of different ones.

the languages i use are in a peculiar way close to me, nothing more. the european viewpoint is only one...europe is only one...not because of the EU. that's simply how it is. personally we feel familiar with some areas, not so familiar with others -this fact is of course also evident in our works.

Who has been responsible for the collation of the images on your two CD albums (depicting ethnic religious trinkets on 'faccica a faccia', and 1950's bikers on 'cuori di petrolio'). While i will admit that these do give the albums quite a timeless or at least regressive aesthetic, do these themes particularly reflect Novy Svet's interests? of course the cover images have a strong connection to the album they are used for. the pictures for 'faccica a faccia' were taken in mexico at the 'dia de los muertos' - the day of the dead. we were obsessed with this day and everything fit very well together when you know that most of the lyrics on the cd deal with death and dying, also in a metaphoric sense...the pictures for 'cuori di petrolio' were taken in russia. later than 1950. they were used because they reflect those memories of the past the whole album is all about.

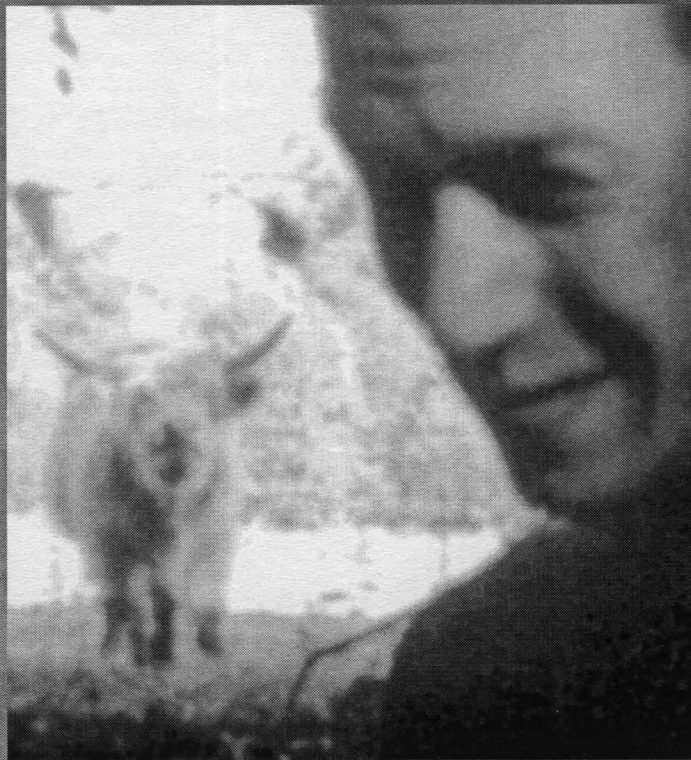
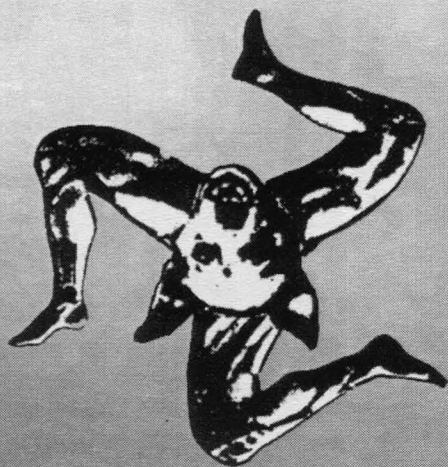
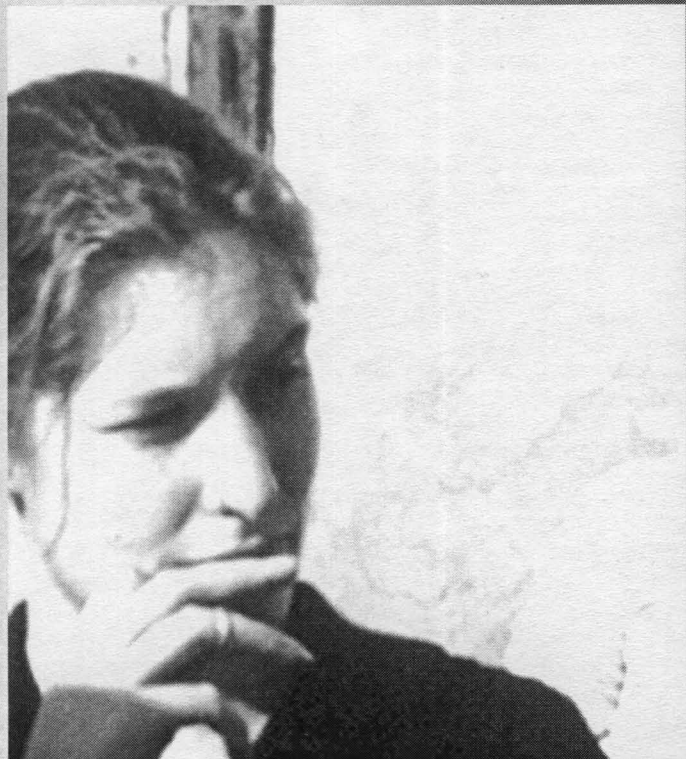
Although the Balkans conflict did not impact on Austria directly, when referencing Novy Svet's folk orientation did the war in the eastern European counties have any psychological effect on you? we don't know. we both do not share any special friendship with the balkans - with the exception of slovenia possibly - although this is often said in magazine articles. the typical music from the balkans had an impact on us for sure but mainly because this music is also always present here in the eastern parts of austria which comes from the monarchy and this long historical period austria, hungary, italy and the balkans shared together. the balkans conflict was something that had to happen and i am sure that it will happen again. these countries will burn forever.

Even though you currently might not have the stature as say Der Blutharsch it appears that this is quickly changing, particularly since you seem to have embraced a similar production output of material with numerous items both released and scheduled for release. I am assuming that writing and producing material comes easily to Novy Svet? What is your view of the 'quality vs. quantity' argument and the generally perception that it is good to be productive but not overly so? indeed novy svet seemed to get more popular during the last year. for us this is

already too much. that's why we have also closed down our p.o. box now and try to reduce the contact to the 'outside' to a minimum. there are times when recording is easy and others when it is not. initially we wanted to take a break after 'cuori di petrolio' but straight after this album was released all the frustration that was accumulated during it's recordings was gone and we felt fresher than ever before. that's why we, especially myself, are so happy to have done this album which has been such a depressing experience. it was like a curse that was hanging over the group for a long time and that was finally gone. we started recording again straight after 'cuori di petrolio' was finished and it was maybe the most productive period in the short life of novy svet. we have two more albums ready. one is 'venezia' that will be mixed in italy in february and released in april through HAU RUCK! (that's what is planned now...too often things change) - this is quite psychedelic. the other one is 'chappaqua' and we have already talked about it. for now this will be available on vinyl only. it is very surreal and full of energy. there are also some more smaller projects like the long scheduled new 10" with CIRCUS JOY. we will also finish this in february in rome and hopefully have it released as soon as possible. we never thought that it is a problem if there exists a large quantity of releases as long as this goes hand in hand with quality. if we would only do re-recordings of 'faccica a faccia', repeat us again and again, it would be enough to release an album each second year to keep people hungry. but - even if this makes you feel sad - there will never be anything that can be compared to 'faccica a faccia' and we also won't do a new 'cuori di petrolio'. our records are all very different from each other and we believe that it needs many releases to allow the listeners to understand each step we take. sometimes the whole chronology is messed up by the labels and their 'business strategies' or other problems. for example 'aspiral III' was thought to be a stepping stone between the two cds (although we have to point out that in this case the label is not guilty for the delay at all)...we will keep up our natural rhythm, no matter if there are ten releases in one year or only one. i would be very glad if some bands would produce more than one album in ten years.

It seem that future recordings are to encompass a cycle via a musical trilogy. What is the focus of this musical concept and are there any particular ideas you have for format and packaging? the trilogy is called 'aspiral' and one part (the third one) has already been released through WHITE LABEL (see above). the overall topic for this project is 'living'...this is hard to explain now. maybe it is better to listen to the music that has more to say than my/our words. 'aspiral III' was dealing with nature and it's powers. one of the missing parts will possibly be about the concept of 'biomechanic' but it seems like people will have to be patient until 2002. originally we wanted to release two 7inches and the final 10" but now it seems like the other parts will also be a bigger format. we will see. the artwork of the whole series will be in the vein of the available record.

Ending remarks? thanks to you and all your readers...and: no, there are no kangaroos in austria.



From reading the review of House of Low Culture's debut CD in these pages it will be quite evident that for me this project was a highly surprising and rewarding discovery. Obviously the review was not mere hype, as I felt it warranted to track down Aaron Turner of the interestingly entitled project to discover a bit more about his evocative (sometimes guitar oriented) experimental soundscape musings....

To start with, it is of specific interest the HoLC is not your main project, rather a side project away from your main guitar oriented bands. Can you please provide a summation of your musical activities up to and including HoLC? i've been a quite a few guitar oriented bands, most recently isis and old man gloom. isis has been together for about 3 years now and we're just beginning work on our 8th release. old man gloom is another side project - isis being my main band, and we've just released our second and third full lengths. both bands are heavy in focus while isis has more of an epic godflesh/swans/melvins influenced sound and old man gloom consists of shorter blasts and long stretches of ambient and sometimes noisy soundscapes - much like what much of the first HOLC consists of. i'm also currently involved with a project called "the lotus eaters" with stephen o'malley and james plotkin. the lotus eaters project also ambient in nature but perhaps less traditionally guitar oriented than HOLC. i've done other things in the past and am working on other projects currently, but these are the most recent and most significant to me at the moment.

Where there any specific groups/ scenes that influenced you into forming HoLC as an independent project? over the last few years i have really enjoyed being involved with the various bands i'm in, but in that time i came to realize that i could create on my own through a totally different process which was gratifying in a way i hadn't experienced in any of my more "traditional" musical experiences. i was very influenced by guitar records that were really expansive in approach like the earth 1-3 records and the neil young soundtrack to the "dead man" film by jim jarmusch. those 2 records were probably the most influential in terms of how i viewed the guitar and what could be done with such simple means. on the other end of the spectrum i absorb a lot of ideas from merzbow, to lull, to pan american, to arovane, to zipperspy, oval and microstoria, etc. i became really interested in electronically generated textures and rhythms, and the juxtaposition of melodic structure and dissonant noise. i wanted to combine all these elements in a way that would somehow flow and that was my initial intention with the project.

Do you consider the HoLC represents the beginning of a new wave of guitar based experimental soundscape type projects? i don't think of HOLC as being part of anything specific - i just used the guitar because it was a tool i knew how to utilize and it helped me make the transition into using other tools and experimenting in ways i had previously avoided. i didn't intend to make a guitar record - it just kind of worked out that way. i will continue to use the guitar because i'm happy with the results achieved thus far, but i won't limit myself to anything. i find that specific classification is something that hinders music and i don't believe in the idea of musical purity. i don't feel the need subscribe to one specific sub genre of the experimental realm, i think the juxtaposition of all these different elements and styles is what makes HOLC interesting for me.

Given the experimental guitar format i am wondering if you are at all well acquainted with Japanese experimental guitar master KK Null? of course - he is another guy who has totally stretched the capabilities of the guitar as a less traditional instrument. the "aurora" record he did in collaboration with james plotkin was another record that has influenced the path i've taken with HOLC. while i don't love everything i've heard from him he certainly has made some great albums. i am also comforted by the fact that he has managed to maintain a successful heavy rock outfit with zenigea and produce successful efforts in a much more experimental realm. i often feel that heavy guitar oriented music is shunned by the more avant slanted audiences and i think it's a shame, especially now with so many underground metal and hardcore acts incorporating more noise oriented elements, electronics, and intellectual conceptual ideas. NULL among others has proved that you don't have to limit yourself to one area to be successful in creating great art.

Also what is with the projects title? Do you consider your rather complex compositions as low brow and if so what would be the relevant marker for referencing to what might be considered 'high' or 'low' brow? i don't see a marker between low art and high art - only that which is perceived by others. the title of the project was sarcastic in the sense that i was referring to what i do as low brow because of the metal/hardcore influence - any thing heavy is considered unintelligent and lacking depth. i also used the title in reference to the perception of other "low brow" activities by mainstream society at large outside of the musical realm. i feel there are many things which many musical communities shuns because of our perceptions of "low" and "high" and it's very limiting in the sense that we cut our selves off from things that might otherwise be enriching in our lives or influential in the things we create. many "low" art forms (comic books, rock, hip hop, design, etc) have risen to intellectual, conceptual, and artistic heights but are still largely ignored by those outside of the community in which they were created because of their perceived status as low art.

Obviously the guitar is the main sound source used within the project presented alongside other less dominant elements of samples and sounds derived from various production/ programming techniques. How do you compose you material - do you lay down the guitar riffs, layers, and melodies to later manipulate and transform these into compositions? usually it works the other way around actually. i often experiment with the textures and soundscapes first - creating the sounds, arranging and layering them, creating a dynamic/flow for the song, and then trying to find a guitar sound and melody to fit with the underlying soundscape. other times i will improvise the guitar lines add a quick textural environment and then with that rough sketch recreate the elements



HOUSE OF LOW CULTURE

HOUSE OF LOW CULTURE

in a more focused and purposeful fashion. often the mixing of the tracks is where the composition is really created. i will add many layers of sound and melody and then add and subtract them in mixing to make a structure - intertwining the components in a way that makes sense to my ear.

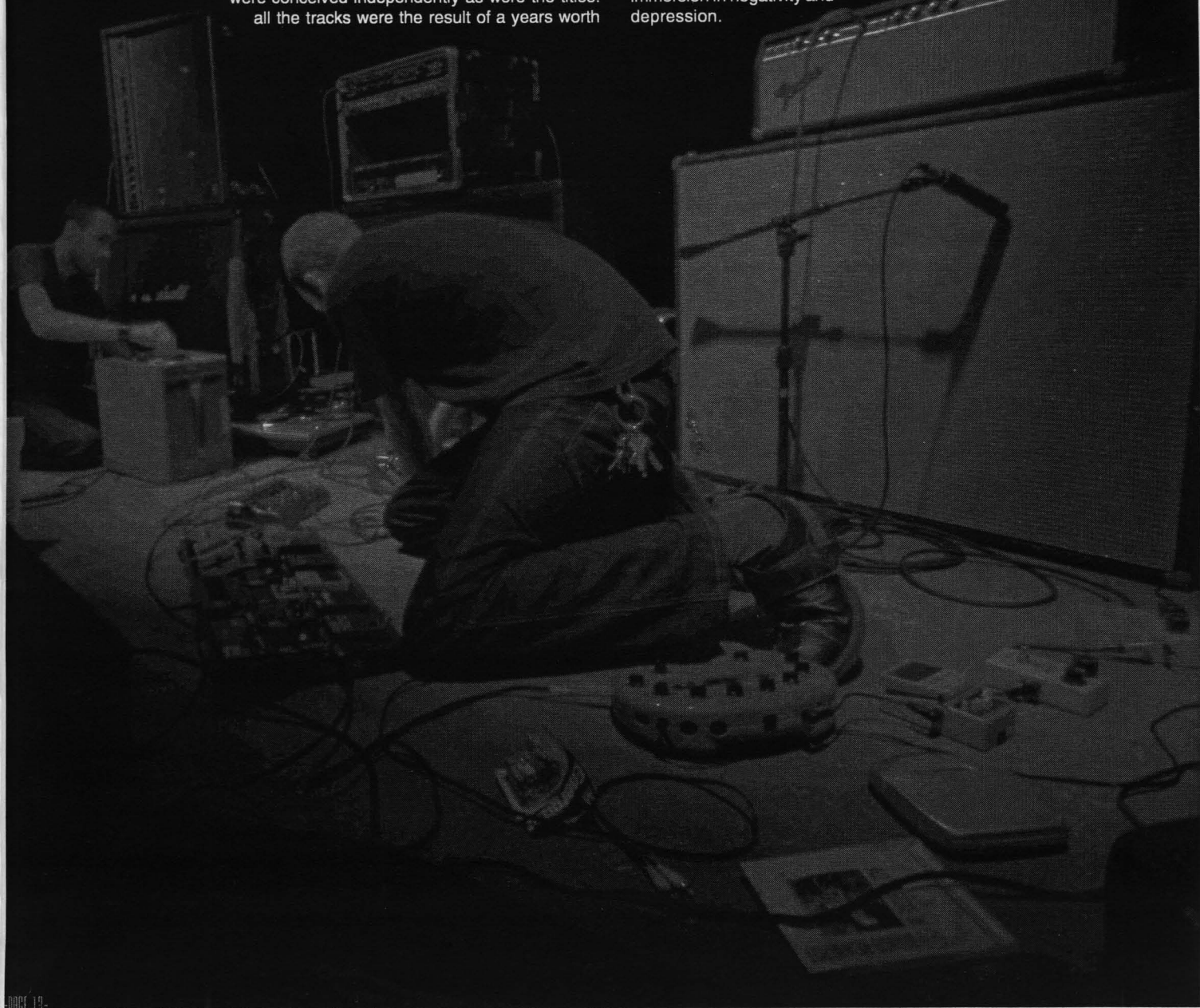
In the review of your album I made a comparison to the motion picture 'Dead Man' in regard to both fleeting sound influence and selected track titles. Are these comparisons and assumptions at all correct? most definitely. the second track on the album was basically improvisations based on the theme created by neil young for the dead man soundtrack. as i said before that was a highly influential record for me and the film equally so. the combination of the music and images in that film is as perfect as i've ever seen, and the dialog, pace of the narrative, and the concept of the movie are brilliant i think. i've rarely heard a more sensitive and emotionally dynamic treatment of the guitar as displayed on that album.

Via your compositions are you trying to evoke certain themes and emotions for the listener, or is your music a personal catharsis with it being an added compliment if others can relate to the atmospheres created? the atmospheres found in my tracks are designed by my sense of musical aesthetics and are structured based around what i find interesting and provoking. these emotional themes are not uncommon ones - isolation, despair, and a sort of tragic triumph and i did not use these themes to relate to the listener in anyway though i know that many people will connect with it in some way. i hope that people can derive something useful from my music, but that was not the intention in it's creation. while this sort of music may be masturbatory in a sense i think it's important for anyone creating any sort of art to fully enjoy what they make before considering the reactions of whoever their audience might be. if you can't embrace your own creations then it's not likely that many others will.

Speaking of your track titles, they don't seem to follow any sort of overall concept, rather utilising unusual phrases such as 'another tragic one: hands sold by poachers' or 'ultrasonic escalating eye irritant'. How important are the track titles to the project are there any intentions for inherent concepts apart from the merely musical? i had no narrative concept in mind when creating the album - all the tracks were conceived independently as were the titles. all the tracks were the result of a years worth

of recording and listening - i picked those tracks out of 3-5 hours of music because of the way they fit together musically. both of my guitar oriented bands are heavy on the conceptual end lyrically and some of those themes carried over into the titles for various tracks on the album, while others were words selected for the emotional impact - to give some sort of little map for individual tracks, suggestive imagery. i think the titles are very significant to me and to the meaning of the tracks, but i don't know if these ideas are easily read by others. i purposely abstract the ideas involved - i don't want to give up anything to easily - i like the idea of the listener having to dig a little to discern the themes and to leave a little room for interpretation.

In relation to the packaging of the 'Submarine Immersion Techniques Vol 1' CD, it is presented a relatively non descript card sleeve, with red foil stamped writings and flower woodcut illustrations that generally do not really give a hint to the style of the compositions. How do you view the packaging as a vehicle to promote and present your wares? i wanted a non standard package because i felt the record did not fit the standard jewel case format. i wanted something unusual and i didn't want something overtly dark. i felt the ideas involved in the album were dark but also beautiful and hopeful in certain ways and that's what i wanted to convey with the packaging. obviously the cathartic venting of negative emotions is an important aspect of this album and many others, but i feel too many projects focus on the negative end while disregarding the benefits of such a venting process. if the idea is to really rid ones self of these destructive emotions through the process of creation i feel that should be apparent in the creation itself. i enjoy a lot of negative sounding music and while i'm not out to make a "happy" record by any means i do feel it's important for me to inject some thread of passivity into house of low culture if only briefly. i believe, at least for myself, that if i am plagued by negative aspects of my external life or my internal psyche then immersing myself in negative music with out examining the positive benefits of doing so will only lead to further immersion in negativity and depression.



I believe that apart from your recently released debut, you already have the second album slated for imminent release also on Crowd Control Activities, along with numerous other split releases and collaborations. Can you give some details of these releases? i had a prototype of the next HOLC album pretty much finished some months back, but i scrapped the whole sequence because i felt it wasn't really a progression from the first album - just a repetition. so i've sat on the material for a while and i'm still incubating the ideas for the next full length. i expect to have all the tracks selected and ready for production in the next couple months and i hope for the release to see the light around may or so. i also did a few collaborations with jeff caxide (who appeared on a couple tracks on the first HOLC album) and luke scarola which will appear on the next album. they are both in other projects with me - jeff in isis and luke in old man gloom. james plotkin will be doing some additional production and editing for the album, so having some outside help will add some new characteristics to the next album. i also have completed three HOLC tracks for a one sided 12" which will be released by the belgian audiobot label sometime this spring. i just completed a track for a funeral march theme compilation on release entertainment which will also feature gruntsplatter, tertium non data, etc. also in the works is a full length album and 12" ep with the previously mentioned "lotus eaters" project with stephen o'malley (of sunn0)) who have 2 full lengths on 2xHNI and a conspirator in the ajna offensive label) and again james plotkin. we have been slowly amassing tracks over the last few months and we have a few more to do before the first couple releases are ready. the 12" ep will be released by stephen's ajna offensive label and the full length has an undetermined home as of yet, but we have a few ideas of who to give it to. other than that i have a few other things in the planning stages, but nothing concrete at this point.

Apart from your earlier mentioned projects, you also run the HydraHead Record label that has had a recent offshoot Double H Noise Industries aka 2xHNI. Can you give a description of the focus and ethos of each label? hydra head has been in existence for about 5 + years now and has maintained a steady focus of mostly heavy avant slanting hardcore, doom, and grindcore. our only intention was to create a really quality label with intelligent bands and packaging and to help elevate the status of heavy music inside our realm and out. the same is true for the double h offshoot except our focus is on the more experimental side with ambient, harsh noise, electronic grind, and avant rock releases in the works. i didn't want the 2xHNI label to have a narrow focus - i just wanted to put out quality releases that i really enjoyed by artists i felt complemented both personalities of the labels. i hope to expose the hydra head audience to the musical realms that double h will be working in and vice versa. immediately upcoming for 2xHNI are albums from atomsmasher (electronic grind masterminded by james plotkin, dj speedranch, and drummer dave witte), an atomsmasher/venetian snares/jack plotkin 7", and a new piano based full length from merzbow. more things will follow eventually including some HOLC material and hopefully some lotus eaters material as well. gotta stay busy...

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Looking back on the year that was 2000, one of the clear revaluations was delivered in the form of the debut album of sonic cartographer Skincage aka Jon Ray. The utter diversity and complexity of the album 'Axon' cannot be summed up in a few mere words, yet 'cinematic isolationism' might just be a start. After being quite enthralled by the CD of course I was intrigued to find out about the man who lurks behind this fantastic opus....

Skincage was not really a known name in the scenes covered by Spectrum, prior to the Malignant Antibody promotional juggernaut making your debut album 'Axon' a household name in the underground, however I believe that 'Axon' was originally released as a self financed CDR. How much did this first version of 'Axon' differ from the official version, and what type of response did it receive? You're correct, there are somewhere between 50 and 70 copies of a CDR version, which was actually preceded by a much more primitive "Axon". It was only about half as long, it had two songs I later didn't feel fit, and only a half dozen of my friends have it. It might be floating around on mix tapes or mp3s but I've only got one of them, with a badly printed liner I did and no label on the CD. The only reason it even existed was because I was able to get high quality mp3s to a dear friend just before my hard drive crashed. It's kind of sad compared to the final release but I have some respect for it. I mean, it was my first CD, there's something exciting about that event for anyone even when there's no real release involved. It's a great feeling, it's a step up from tapes, for sure. But I'm straying. I'm fuzzy on dates in general (one might say my table of contents is broken), so I can't really remember when it came out, but the official self released version of "Axon" had 12 tracks. These are the 11 tracks that the MA release has, and one more, called "Ichor". There are two versions of that song, one of which only exists on the early "Axon", and one I re-compiled from what samples I could find from the original, having cleaned them up a bit. The sound just wasn't the same as the original though. There was a particular artifact of a certain combination of the original samples that caused a sort of background chant. Maybe the sound was the result of overlapping fragments of the noise I was "cleaning" out of the samples. I spent a long time learning how to defeat things like tape hiss. Now I know it can be used creatively sometimes. There are lessons in failure, which is something I don't remember often enough.

Was the 'Axon' CDR your official release? It was official, you could say. It was reviewed very favourably in brainwashed.com's The Brain by Jon Whitney, which I'm grateful for. I didn't even really have to promote it which is probably good because I am pretty worthless at that sort of thing. I mentioned it on the Coil list and later Jon recommended me to the list without any request from me, which was flattering. In addition, Jon Cook of infin8ty.com did a great deal of hyping the CD to people on irc and email lists, and in addition to printing the artwork for me he sold it through his site. So basically, due largely to the effort of good friends, a lot of people bought it, which surprised and pleased me a lot. Some of them even wrote to tell me what they got out of it, which usually happens right when I am feeling discouraged and cures me temporarily. I really owe a lot to everyone who supports me in various ways.

How long have you been partaking in such sonic experimentation? Well, that's hard to pinpoint. I used to make really silly mix tapes of songs from the 50s and 60s from the radio when I was around ten or so. After that I started making collage tapes by holding the tape recorder near the TV speaker, which seems really ridiculous now but maybe I should try it again! Eventually I figured out that I could just run cables from the VCR's audio out into my beloved tape player, so I started doing exactly that. I was very fond of making these collage tapes, and I'm sure that's a big root of Skincage right there. Another thing I liked to do was record all the sound from a movie or tv show and then try to imagine my own visuals for it when I was trying to go to sleep. I've always had trouble sleeping so things like this were what I did to tire my mind out. I think that kind of imagining also led to Skincage. When I got a computer with a sound card I started recording from VCR to tape and then to soundcard, since I couldn't very well sneak in and grab my parents' VCR at 1 AM and connect directly. I was using this really low bitrate DOS program before there were .wav files. I think it used .voc files. It was monophonic of course, with the sampling rate still less than half CD quality. Damn, I wish I could find it again! Eventually I borrowed a 4 track from a friend and that got me into layering/mixing. I got my own later on and I got better at sampling and got better software. I did several tapes by the time I was 17 or 18, but only a few I'm actually proud of. So basically I've been doing some kind of sound experiments about half my life.

As it seems that the original version differs from the later in that the official version was mastered by expert knob twiddler Phil Easter (and also Malignant Antibody label boss). How much of the sonic intensity that we hear on the official release can be accredited to his input? Well, when I first sent Phil my masters of Axon to see if he would remaster it for the CDR release, he told me he was really impressed with what I'd done on my own. I'm pretty proud of my original efforts as well, especially considering that for about half the tracks all I had to work with were the final mix files, with no way to edit them except minute processing on the final mixes themselves rather than re-recording them from a multitrack program. I was lucky in that I had managed to back most of these final mix wav files up to zip disks I had forgotten about until after the crash. Without them I would have had to work from decoded mp3s, which as anyone knows is just nasty.

So I did my best to reconstruct and finalize these tracks, but it wasn't perfect. I had gone a little crazy toward the end and I made a few amateurish mistakes trying to get the volume higher and such (I know better now), so he went in and fixed some of the unwanted crunchiness and stuff like that. I lost some of the more shrill high end which I kind of miss in retrospect, but overall I'm really pleased with his work. It sounds less like something I did on a consumer level soundcard and more like "tape manipulation" (the term he used, which I think is pretty fitting). It has more clarity now, and it retains its life with subtle improvements here and there. I've had people tell me it would sound great on vinyl.. maybe someday.

How has the overall response been to the official 'Axon' CD including pertinent sales? As of now more than half the copies have sold, which is encouraging. I'm glad people enjoy it. I've had people tell me that they've recommended it to friends which is wonderful to hear. There's also been a lot of great feedback on the tumorist and from other groups online, which keeps me going. I'm thankful to all the people who put me on playlists and got people into Skincage in other ways. And in person people really listen when I play them something, which means a lot. I just got my first check from Malignant which is satisfying. I think I'd frame it if I didn't have to turn it in in order to cash it. Perhaps I'll scan it beforehand for posterity. Anyway even though it would be ridiculous to be into this kind of project for the money it's ideal to be paid for what you love, and while it's no fortune it still feels good. I plan to put the money back into gear. Skincage feeding itself so to speak.

While 'Axon' clearly aligns with the underground "cinematic isolationist" mold, on the other it could have easily come from less underground experimental music scenes. How much were you aware of the scenes revolving around labels such as Malignant, Tesco Organisation, Loki Foundation, Cold Spring etc prior to being signed for the official debut release? I've never really known much about the various noise scenes, though I've listened to their output here and there. It's kind of awkward and amusing at the same time, being looped in with artists I've never heard of and scenes I've never known of or acted within consciously. I'm not offended, just not sure what to make of it. I think some people get far too serious about these things. I can see where labels are useful when you're trying to discuss this type of music or that, or trying to describe what kind of music someone is doing. I think it's great when you can't really put someone in a drawer like that. Change is important in music just like anywhere else. I hope I remain a little hard to label, and I hope a lot more musicians like that emerge. I think it's high time there be more music that we can only refer to as "good". I have to say I am happy to see that people who are into much harsher music are genuinely into what I'm doing, I was kind of nervous about that when I first got on Malignant and started reading the tumorist.

Given I had a difficult time reviewing 'Axon' due to the compositions evoking a multidimensional sonic textured whirlpool, I still think the "cinematic isolationism" tag is at least a starting pointer to Skincage's style. Would you agree with this "cinematic isolationist" reference and how would you further embellish your own description of Skincage's work? Well, like I said, if people need a phrase that's their call. "Cinematic" is a fairly appropriate adjective since I'm telling a story, and "isolationist" is probably not bad either, since I'm a bit more of a hermit than I'd like to be. I can see how in magazines and such you have to work within some kind of framework when you're doing reviews. The best way I can think to describe my work is that I'm doing what feels natural. It's just about the only time I'm at ease, and probably the only time I really feel like I'm doing something right.

To what extent is Skincage sampled based and do you provide any 'musical' input in the traditional scene? I've worked with samples since the beginning, it's central to what I do, and probably always will be. I'm not well-versed in music theory or even scales or that sort of thing, but I'm not against it. I'm more and more interested in playing instruments, homemade or traditional instruments played in new ways perhaps. The more sounds the better no matter where they come from, that's how I look at it. I'm writing an actual score for an upcoming piece, which will involve live use of modified speech synthesizers interacting with pre-recorded manipulations of human speech in "tongues". It's for a class, so I'm not sure if it will end up recorded or not, but chances are it will. Whether it gets released or not depends on how I feel about it in the end, but either way the challenge of writing effective notation for music that doesn't have set pitches ought to be good for me.

Do Skincage's compositions tend to write themselves as many other artists tend to indicate of their creative processes? In some cases, yeah. I'd go so far as to say my most successful work is done this way. I'm hopeful that I can find a way to get into this mode more often and more easily. Sleep deprivation, working through fevers, stuff like that can be helpful, but it's not healthy to do that all the time. This is why I've adopted the method of creating sounds while I'm in that sort of analytical mode, and reserving composition for when I'm at some point of emotional saturation or a rare moment of clarity. Waiting for the right times means that things take longer, and I'm probably notorious by now for just slipping by with deadlines, but I'd rather be late than crank something out early that I'm just not happy with.

Can you also provide some details of your inspirational sources and creative methods? Inspiration is all around. I don't understand people who say they don't have any ideas. I have my share of slumps, but sometimes it really is as easy as simply slowing down and paying attention to daily life. There's so much going on, if you just stop to notice things, they can teach you a lot. I'm inspired by all kinds of things: random snippets of conversation out of context, music from passing cars, insect and other animal behavior... the strange palette of sounds that emerges when you close your eyes, stop what you're doing, and just listen to the world. I keep my window slightly open even in winter so I can listen to this. I'm rewarded with a constant wash of cars on the highway, static rhythms of rain, scattered conversation from the parking lot five floors down, distant sirens... it's beautiful. Sometimes I like to turn on my mixer, aim a microphone out the window, and just listen on headphones. It's not all outdoors, either. This week I've noticed a strange sound that happens randomly somewhere around my desk. I can't find the source, much less record it. It's partly infuriating, but in a way I am charmed by it. Or sometimes when I'm unable to sleep I listen to the refrigerator and heater sounds phasing in and out of each other. That sort of thing is what I mean. With high quality sampling as easy and flexible as it is now, everything's a potential instrument, and I think that attitude keeps me inspired.

Do you envisage that Skincage would have existed (albeit in different sonic format) if it were not for the common availability of samplers and computer software? I think I'd be doing something similar, but it would perhaps be more primitive. As I mentioned I was working with little more than a VCR and a tape recorder before I got my first sound card, so who knows where that might have led. Maybe I'd be working within similar lines with more of a hardware base, using complex systems of tape loops or sampling delay pedals. I've flirted with these kinds of things off and on, and I think they're just as valid a means to work as say a multitracking program and all that comes with those. I've seen bands live who used nothing but a series of pedals and produced beautiful results. It's really more about the technique than about the tools. Sampling on the fly and doing something meaningful with it live has a charm that you can't always get by doing things with software; there's an ephemeral quality because that particular version only happens once. So I plan on moving toward more of a balance between software and hardware. But really the intent and outcome

are more important than the tools, and there are many roads to one point. I'm always fascinated to see how other people, both musicians and other artists, are getting to some of the same places I am in really drastically different ways. I think we all have a lot to learn from each other. Maybe that's the whole point. **Who would you nominate as artists that either have a similar sound if not musical sampling construction ethic to that of Skincage? Talking of sonic construction ethics or ideals, are you of the "re-contextualisation" school of thought?** Well, that's very old school and I think it's always been there, from Futurists to musique concrete to the real DJs.. For a long time people have been fed up with where music is going and follow up on their urge to inject life back into whatever their field is by using sounds or tools in a new way. I think most artists who use samples or loops are automatically in this league, but it also includes the realm of experimental composers in all kinds of music. As for similar artists, I really don't know. I say that not to be pompous but because I can't really listen to my own music in a way that allows me to accurately compare it to someone else's. I'm all inside my music, but no matter how much I enjoy someone else's it is still external. See what I mean? I could produce a list of bands or composers I admire here but that's not really answering the question or getting anywhere. I'm sure there are people doing things similar to what I do; I've got no illusions about being an island as far as this style of music. I'd like to find out from people who listen to Skincage who they think I sound like so I can check those musicians out and see what they're doing. It would be as close as I can get to hearing my own music externally, and I think that would be interesting.

In my review of the Skincage album I made reference to my interpretation of your moniker. Firstly and most obviously 'Skincage' is reference to the body (your body?), but perhaps it could be a more abstract metaphor to that of an individual trapped inside the body of society. What are your thoughts of this interpretation and does your own significantly differ? The name is just a glyph really, something I came up with that seemed appropriate at the time and I've stuck with. Like the music, I think it's open to interpretation. One thing I'd like people to understand about Skincage imagery or what have you is that there are no wrong answers when someone asks what one of my songs is about. What I thought of when I composed it is not necessarily what you get out of it by listening, and really we're both correct. In some cases, people report results similar to what I intended without me clueing them in first, and that's always exciting (because I'm not sure how I pull it off) but not a case of there being a valid or invalid interpretation.

Again referencing interpretations, with the CD title 'Axon' do you perceive that your compositions could be representative of structures at a molecular level? I'm flattered by the comparison, actually. Hidden worlds will never fail to fascinate me. I'd love to know someone who could get me access to an electron microscope, I'm sure I'd be addicted instantly. To sort of repeat the answer to the last question though, if that's the mood you get out of it, you're absolutely right, and I'm glad to hear about whatever people glean from what I do.

In regard to your website it features numerous images of abandoned and decrepit factories taken by yourself - some of which were featured in the collage of the official 'Axon' release. What intrigues and draws you towards such subject matter? A metaphor for death and decay perhaps? I look at the remains of old buildings the same way I'd look on a piece of someone else's junk that I could later turn into an instrument of some kind, or a tape I found on the street that ended up being full of great samples. The fact that it was discarded kind of makes it fascinating to me, I like to find out what's "left" in it, I guess you could say. I feel like if something I find seems to have a story to tell, it's my responsibility to help that happen. Those factories haven't produced a product for decades, but they certainly provide a lot of inspiration. Giving something new life even if it's only in my own mind is one of the most satisfying things I can think of to do.

As a bit of an x-mas 2000 bonus, we were treated to an MP3 file of a brand new song on the Malignant Radio web site. This track 'There is no Silence' is very

minimalist and in scope is almost an environmental type recording (in that it utilises only slightly altered field recordings of common sounds). Does this at all mark a future direction of Skincage material? Well, in a way yes but in others no. Minimalism is a nice break from complex structures and I'm sure I'll return to that territory but I don't think I'll be making permanent switches in that direction. That track started out as a class project where my aim was to explore the sounds usually avoided when recording film sound on location, basically trying to turn it into something useful. Then I got more into it as a chance to demonstrate the power of focused listening. A lot of the source material was gathered with a homemade stereo contact mic (this is easy and I'd be glad to explain how to build it to anyone who emails me). I walked around from about one in the morning until dawn to try to take advantage of the brief quiet that exists on this campus during those hours, listening for sounds that caught my ear. Then I just probed around finding the best places to pick up the sound and electric taped them in place. What results is a transference of say an area of one foot into a large mental space with each channel carrying a different element of the sound. I was really happy with most of the results. I think this kind of listening is good for you, which is why I decided to make the piece publicly available. I wish I'd had more time to expand it, but it's doubtful many people would download a 20 minute track anyway. Maybe future albums will see me returning to this method.

I hear that there are a couple of split releases, collaboration efforts and compilations awaiting release that include Skincage input. What can you inform us of regarding these? Well, I did a remix for Leech of NTT which was quite a pleasant experience. I wanted to try doing a "blind" remix so instead of picking a song and remixing it he sent a minidisc of short samples and I made a drone track from these fragments. He was happy with it and I feel it was pretty successful. Hopefully that release will be out pretty soon and I can see how it sounds along with the other contributors. I'm really excited to be on the same CD as Lab Report! I don't know if this is what you were referring to but I'll also have a track on Krach Test, a compilation being put out by Nicolas of Recycle Your Ears. More info's available at <http://www.adnoiseam.net/>. I'm excited about this too, as people like Vox Barbara, Aural Blasphemy, and Sickrobot are also going to be on. There are a lot of other bands involved but to be honest I'm not familiar with many, which is a situation I should probably fix. Sickrobot/Aex and I are going to work together at some point under the name Testset, and that'll also be put out by Nicolas. That's about it right now. I'm pretty interested in collaborations as they've gone well for the most part in the past. I'd like to do something with Hiiflos Kind of infin8ty.com, to pay him back for being so supportive thus far. I guess I'll just see what develops.

Have you commenced any work on an official second album? Any concepts of ideas as to what we might be able to expect? Well, mostly I've been working on production, trying to learn better ways to do things, and new things to try. I've also been building instruments so that I can do more external to the sound card and eventually have something which to more actively perform live, which is something else I'm interested in doing. It's gone fairly well in the few occasions I've done it so far. I wonder if anyone out there reading this was at the show I did in July 2000 at Aurafice in Seattle. For the time being, I'm stockpiling sounds and ideas. When inspiration hits, when I find something I need to say, I'll be well armed to tell my new stories. I'm not really sure what to expect from myself as far as a new album, given the chaotic way in which everything I do takes shape. I don't think it will necessarily be Axon part 2; I don't think that's really necessary or very creative. Too many musicians are already putting out basically the same album over and over with different names and I don't want to fall into that trap. So it will probably be a departure, but as long as people keep their ears and minds open, I don't think fans of "Axon" will be disappointed. Whatever I'm doing, the same mentality sits behind it, and I think the same kind of feeling will be there no matter if I'm doing samples or performing on a homemade instrument. If it ever stops being there, I won't really have a reason to continue, right?

middle pillar presents:

"Middle Pillar Presents" is the reasonably recent label imprint of Middle Pillar mail order, who have thus far released some great examples from the ambient/ ethereal/ folk noir scenes. Both KD (K) and James (J) provided their thoughts regarding some of my perceptions of the label, whilst also briefly delving into some of their associated musical projects.

How long had Middle Pillar been operating as a mail-order outlet prior to starting the record component? Likewise what was the basic motivation to head down the label path? K: I started the mail-order company in December of 1994 with my wife, Jennifer. At the time I was working for a record store that did a lot of mail order, but for rock and roll, blues and rockabilly. I always wanted to open a store, but the rents for a storefront in New York City is near extortion, so starting a dark music mail order company was a pretty good compromise. I could apply the little business sense I had with the skills I learned on how to properly pack a \$200 LP going to Australia via surface mail, combine both with an appreciation for dark music, and hopefully still be able to pay rent at the end of the month. Getting the balls to just do it was the hardest part. There was apparently enough of a need that it worked – people actually sent me money in the mail! Also, I was tired of people complaining that they couldn't get any of my bands CDs (Loretta's Doll) because the label we were on (World Serpent) wasn't stocked locally, or because stores charged way too much for import CDs. Of course this is going back a couple years. So I started off carrying music that was difficult to find elsewhere, and we offered them at reasonable prices. As people became familiar with the name "Middle Pillar" a kind of branding began to occur. It was only natural for us to branch out in becoming a label.

J: Naturally there was a void to exploit in the way of bringing American bands to the same fan base that the Europeans have, but producing them domestically at a cheaper cost. Middle Pillar Presents as a label provides an outlet for a lot of quality bands that could not find markets for their music to be heard.

Who are the management players behind Middle Pillar and does it differ between be it mail-order component to record label component? K: We have a relatively small, overworked staff that deals with the Distribution end of it, all crammed into an office in Manhattan. Wholesale, retail, packing, shipping, and customer service is all handled out of that office, which is where I spend my days, with my crack suicide staff! James spends his days in another office dealing with mostly label-type things, or something.

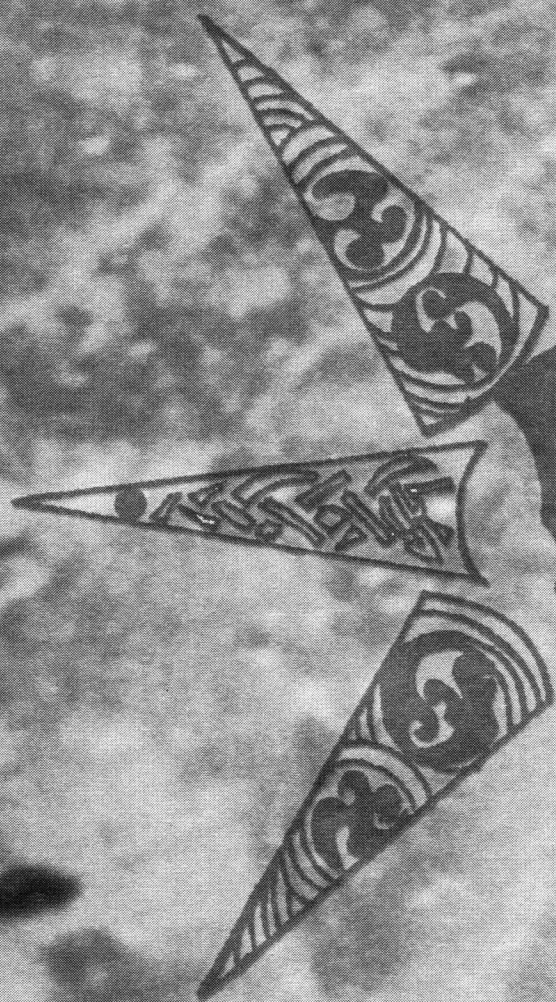
J: I handle most of the promotional correspondence between the label and those who receive advance copies of new releases (radio stations, DJ's and clubs). A lot of the merchandising end goes through me as well, sending posters and other free items to events like record release parties and sponsoring events like Gothcon for example.

Thus far you have exclusively released American artists and furthermore all seem to be derived from an ambient/ ethereal/ folk noir scene centred in New York. Firstly how true is this assumption and secondly is this cultivation of a particular American scene/ style/ sound something that you plan to continue with? Do you ever envisage expanding the roster to non-American artists? J: As mentioned earlier, the original intention of the label was to provide a showcase for American bands, not necessarily from New York. As a matter of fact the first band signed to the label was The Machine in the Garden, who are based in Austin, Texas. Most recently we've signed Sumerland from Portland, Oregon. Overall the scene was already there, Middle Pillar Presents just provides a platform for their music. But we wouldn't limit ourselves to only having American bands out of some sort of pride. Initially the idea of MPP was to have domestic bands, grab people's attention and say, hey, here's some great music! In the future, I would like to see MPP having artists from other parts of the globe. For the rest of this year we're concentrating on the many wonderful releases we have coming out.

K: A lot of the bands featured on our "What is Eternal" compilation were from all over the place, as well as New York. I'd like to think we are a part of the scene here, but I don't think we set out to define the New York genre through our releases. I feel as a small label, it's important to work with people you know, so I think it's only natural that we'd be picking from the "locals" to a certain extent.

Further to the above do you consider Middle Pillar typically American, or is it that whilst the label might be American that signs American artists, that the actual music has more of a European focus? K: I'm not really sure what "typically American" means anymore, to be honest. We're signing American acts out of support for music that is in our own backyards, that is within our direct field of vision. Good art isn't always relative to geography! I think as far as the style of music we sign, it is of itself a unique mixture of cultures, European cultures inclusive. I think that two great examples would be The Machine In The Garden's "Out of the Mists" and the forthcoming "Sivo" album by Sumerland; both draw from classical influences, but mix them with other factors unique to an American cultural experience.

Talking of a European focus, Middle Pillar releases are distributed and/or repressed by World Serpent Distribution for the European market. How did this collaboration come about? K: I'd already been working with World Serpent as a part of Loretta's Doll as well as buying from them for the



Distribution. Since five artists from the "What Is Eternal" compilation were already distributed by WSD, it seemed simple enough that they would be interested in picking it up, which they did. In early 1999 WSD took a very limited amount of WIE, not really expecting much from it, but it sold out very quickly. In fact by the time our ads came out, we were totally out of product! It was insane. Between the copies the artists got for free, and the large amount of promos we sent, only about 650 copies were available for actual sale. When WSD wanted to re-press it, with a focus on a European audience, the bands agreed. At first I felt that I wanted to focus on newer releases, instead of looking back. But it was a terrific opportunity for the bands and ourselves. But as far as our working relationship with WSD, they were very supportive about the label as a whole, and I appreciate their honesty in their dealings with me. I'm in awe of the strong reputation they've built, and thankful that we can be a part of it.

In relation to both at home and abroad what has the interest been like in Middle Pillar as a label and likewise artist's releases? What has been the most successful release to date? J: I've been on top of where the music is being played and it astounds me where it can be found. Europe and South America seem to be the most open as far as airplay goes. While in the US, these genres of music are largely underground and the domain of college radio, stations from Brazil to Belgium, Chile to Lithuania and even as far as Moscow, Russia have been playing Middle Pillar artists. And with the advent of web broadcasting the music reaches the smallest corners of the globe. Here in the states, there are a limited number of darkwave and experimental radio shows, which are usually limited to a small amount of time. Within the confines of an hour or two, there's only so much that can be played. Fortunately, we try to maintain our relationships with these DJ's who rarely hear any feedback from anyone regarding their playlists. I always send thanks when I see a MPP disc played. We've tried to build a reputation of having interesting releases and quality music. I think the DJ's realize it and that's why you'll hear MPP on those stations. As far as releases go, there have been strong reactions to several bands. A Murder of Angels have received many accolades by those in the experimental set and we sold out of that very quickly. Our compilations have done very well as an overall sampler of the label and as a showcase for upcoming talent like The Unquiet Void and The Mirror Reveals. Our top seller continues to be The Machine in the Garden who's second album for MPP, "Out of the Mists", has just been released.

All Middle Pillar items to date have been packed in non-standard fold out card digi-pack and are in fact quite different from what you would normally consider as a digi-pack. Was there a particular philosophy behind choosing this presentation other than to give Middle Pillar releases an easily identifiable appearance? J: We looked at several different formats and decided that standard jewel cases were not the way to go initially. The special cardboard packaging adds to the overall aesthetic of the label and adds another layer of style to a diminishing art - the album cover. A lot of music packaging these days has an assembly line feel to it. Luckily we're fortunate to have such talented graphics people working on our covers and promotional items. Reviews have often commented on the quality and uniqueness of the packages so I'd say we succeeded in our choice.

K: My philosophy is that this music should not be looked at as an easily duplicated commodity, a hard call in the digital age, and I think our packaging underscores that thought. The covers, like the music, need to be shown respect. It appeals to the collector part of my personality.

When meticulously perusing your releases it is noted that thus far the numbering of the releases are progressively counting back from 100. What is the reasoning behind this? J: Just another idiosyncrasy. The standard releases move backwards from 999 on down and the compilations start from 000 (What is Eternal) on up. I guess it's conceivable that they might meet up one day but we'll worry about it then!

How do you view the current state of the underground ambient/ ethereal/ folk scene particularly in that there seems to have been an increase in releases and labels over the past two years? K: I think the explosion in labels and the growth in the number of bands leads to a broader audience, it also enlarges the signal to noise ratio between the truly innovative and the imitative. But I still believe that more music is definitely better, for any scene. Middle Pillar is a new label that's blossomed over the last two years, so I definitely feel that we could be lumped in as part of that new wave of "Johnny Come Lately's" too. I don't see too many entries into that category on the American side of the pond. It's mostly new European labels that are making bigger leaps, like Athanor, Eis & Licht, Fluttering Dragon, Prikosnovenie, Oktagon, Cynfeirdd, Loki, Stateart. In the US we've got Triumvirate, Crowd Control, Malignant, Precipice...us....

Furthermore what would you consider are the biggest opportunities and or challenges for the current scene? K: The biggest challenge of any scene is not to implode with personal gripes and politics, which is hard thing not to do. When people are doing things out of love, pride becomes an important issue. It's important to be wise and let the scene grow, because it's bigger than just one person, it always is.

J: In a market place that is dominated by the majors, I hope the independents do not follow their example of churning out repetitive product and assembly line crap. There is a mindset within the dark music scene that it's dying out slowly. I think it's an overall pessimism that underlies the material within its psychological framework. This isn't bubble-gum pop after all! But it always seems to thrive. And with new technology on the horizon, the smaller labels will make the most out of it (Napster for example) until someone bigger catches on and exploits it for the masses. I've always felt the best marketing tool is bringing the music right to the audiences. People will always love the live experience and clubs can offer it to them. Since you won't always be able to catch anyone on the Top 20 in your neighborhood, therein lies the domain of the independent.

In regards to artists on Middle Pillar, do they have to hold a certain philosophy or worldview to be considered for signing? On an alternate tangent, if you appreciated an artist's music but did not agree with and/or condone their sources of inspiration, would this prevent a project from being signed to Middle Pillar? K: As far as the distribution is concerned, I certainly carry music from artists that I don't necessarily agree with on a philosophic or ethical basis. We carry over 3000 titles, and I'm sure that there must be at

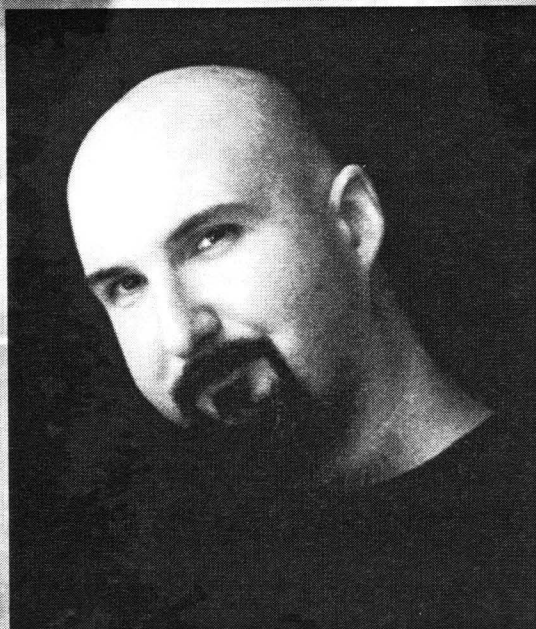
least one artist we sell that has a point of view that I would consider misinformed! And as soon as I find them, I'm going to sit him or her down and set them straight! □

J: We haven't had a situation where an artist's politics or philosophy has effected their relationship with us, so there's no point of reference. In the case of a theme compilation, it would make sense if the artist understood and felt similarly about the concept. For example, I wouldn't ask Ted Nugent to do a song for PETA. I guess we'll have to deal with each situation as it comes but personally, I'm more interested in the music itself.

K: For instance, we'll be doing a compilation based on the Tree of Life, that we hope to have out by next winter. We tried to select artists that would create appropriate musical interpretations of each Sephiroth associated with the Tree. The Tree is a powerful symbol, so we wanted musicians who I thought understood those particular concepts. So I suppose that would be an example of acceptance or denial based on our perception of an artist's particular belief system. Guilty as charged!

Knowing that you both have your own musical projects (KD with Kobe and James with The Mirror Reveals) can you give introductions to the music, style and history of these projects? Also are these the only musical formations you are involved with? K: I should start by saying that I've actually been a member of Loretta's Doll since almost its inception in 1992, and I'm happy to report that Middle Pillar has just jointly released, with WSD, our newest album "Creeping Sideways". My role in the band is percussion and rhythm. I've been playing electronic percussion for the past few years, which allows me to explore non-traditional "drum" sounds, and non-naturalistic instrumentation in a rhythmic way. "Creeping Sideways" was for me an exploration of more experimental form than my role in the past, and the end result was a bit more abstract. The record features returning guest "Doll" Orson Wells, has Derek Rush (Dream Into Dust, Chthonic Streams, A Murder of Angels) again returning for a stint in the "bassist" role, but also helping to shape the sound during mixes and production. We've just played Suffering Clown's A Night of Misanthropy, which is a live underground music event in NYC, and is always great fun. Live, our sound has always been a bit angrier, and ballsier, than our records. And of course there's our long awaited "comp of comp tracks" "Mein Komp" (hehe). My other musical project is KOBE, which is steeped in traditional Japanese percussion, then distilled by modern western approaches, re-shaped, and re-created. With the conception of Butoh, I did a song in a modern style that was a sort of tribute to Kodo drummers trapped in a Neubauten-esque nightmare! The final mix turned out different from what I had initially imagined, not as traditional sounding as I had hoped, but certainly not bad. And thus a new project was born! I'll have a CD completed by the fall, I hope.

J: The Mirror Reveals was an idea forged during the production of "What is Eternal". The track received lots of attention, which led to the full length, "Frames of



Teknicolor". I've always wanted to work with a female vocalist and Kit Messick provided the inspiration. Listening to her vocal style through her background with the theater, it allowed me to write dark emotional torch songs. What started as a studio project has evolved into a full band with the addition of Joanna Dalin (ex-Backworld) on violin. A follow up EP will be out shortly, with another full length on its heels. It's wonderful to work on creating art instead of nurturing others. Eventually, I would like to return to my roots and do an aggressive punk-industrial record but that's down the road.

What are the plans for Middle Pillar both in regard to the short term and long term? What of upcoming releases? J: Middle Pillar Presents plans to expand through greater distribution in the US while maintaining a presence in Europe and the rest of the globe through advertising and the loyalty of radio and club DJ's there. MPP is growing exponentially before our eyes. It's a delight and a nightmare! I need more sleep! We just released "Abnormal Love" by THREAD, an electronic tour de force of many styles. The auteur, James Izzo, has gained the admiration of many artists included Jarboe (ex-SWANS) who sang on the CD. The Loretta's Doll's "Creeping Sideways" CD should be in stores by the time this is read. Upcoming is the debut album by Sumerland entitled "SIVO, who are this amazing blend of acoustic instruments and the resonant voice of Dorian Campbell.

K: We'll be releasing albums by ZOAR over the next year or so. They do amazing textural, dark and beautiful industrial atmospherics, extremely theatrical stuff, heartfelt but with a razor's edge. Next fall will bring a series of Cdeps from our artists featuring new material, remixes and a video. Mirror Reveals will be doing one, as will Kobe, Zoar, and Thread. Another release from A Murder of Angels is in the works. Plus the aforementioned Tree of Life comp by the 2001 holiday season. Middle Pillar Presents has a lot on its plate right now and many people are listening. It's an exciting time!

Middle Pillar Presents: A Discography:

MPP999: the Machine in the Garden "One Winter's Night" CD Digipak

MPP998: A Murder of Angels "While You Sleep" CD Digipak

MPP997: The Mirror Reveals "Frames of Teknicolor" CD Digipak

MPP995: The Unquiet Void "Between the Twilights" CD Digipak

MPP994: the Machine in the Garden "Out of the Mists" Digipak CD

MPP993: Thread "Abnormal Love" Digipak CD

MPP992: Sumerland: "Sivo" CD Digipak (softspot)

MPP991: Loretta's Doll: "Creeping Sideways" CD Jewelcase - Joint Release with WSD (WSCD023)

MPP990: Zoar "In The Bloodlit Dark" CD Jewelcase

MPP989: KOBE: "tba" CDEP

MPP988: Zoar "tba" CDEP

MPP987: The Mirror Reveals "tba" CDEP

MPP986: Thread "tba" CDEP

MPP002: V/A "Butoh: Dance of Darkness" CD Digipak (softspot)

Limited to 1500 copies; With exclusive songs or mixes by KOBE, A Murder of Angels, Mors Syphilitica, the Machine in the Garden, The Unquiet Void, Sumerland, Wench, The Mirror Reveals, Thread and Zoar.

MPP001: V/A "Tree of Life" CD Limited to ??? Final track listed "TBA"

MPP000 V/A "What Is Eternal" CD Digipak Limited to 1000 copies With exclusive songs or mixes by the Machine in the Garden, 4th Sign of the Apocalypse, Unto Ashes, Mors Syphilitica, Quartet Noir, Loretta's Doll, Dream Into Dust, The Changelings, Tony Wakeford & Tor Lundval, Backworld, The Mirror Reveals, Jarboe, Athanor, and Zoar

MPP000X: V/A "What Is Eternal" CD Jewelcase Limited Re-issue; Re-mastered; Exclusive distribution via WSD Contains same track listing as MPP000, but with a remixed Jarboe track

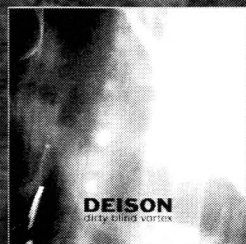


WILT - "Wither" CD - \$11(us) \$13(wld)

Wilt extol the invisible corners of the thirsty earth with this exaltation of decay and reclamation. Best described as Noise Ambient, "Wither" is a aural quagmire of dusky vapors and ivy draped relics, grating erosions and the thorny shadows that rise and fall across dying landscapes. Moldering Dark Noise from this inspired American project. Limited to 500 copies.

KK NULL / MOZ - "A Split Release" CD - \$11(us) \$13(wld)

KK Null presents five new tracks of frenetic electronics and rhythmic experiments, ranging from cacophonous to an almost tribal atmosphere. Ever evolving within a sphere of obscure tension the details reveal themselves with a stalwart elegance. Moz delivers 6 tracks of socially introspective Death Industrial and Dark Ambient. Drifting slabs contrast sharply with vitriolic sonics to render this misshapen pillar of sobering electronics. Limited to 500 copies.



DEISON - "Dirty Blind Vortex" CD - \$11(us) \$13(wld)

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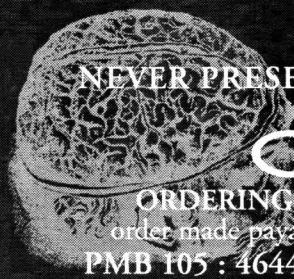
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Given Folkstorm essentially represents an even nastier musical alter ego of one Mr Nordvargr of the infamous MZ412, this really negates the requirement for a lengthy introduction. With the project representing a back to basics and raw approach to power electronics/ industrial noise and more particularly after a spate of recent releases (most of which are reviewed in these pages) it was high time for a Folkstorm feature.



When did Folkstorm become an active and established side project to MZ. 412? What essentially were your reasons and/ or needs to start a solo side project? Folkstorm started as an idea in my head some years ago... must have been 1997 or something like that. There were many reasons for starting it - the main one being my creative head... I had a lot of energy and ideas that I had to "channel".

If we were to compare the first three MZ. 412 albums to Folkstorm there is a substantial difference to be noted, however as the Nordik Battle Signs saw a more militant evolution of MZ. 412's sound, therefore this CD could be viewed as having more clear parallels with Folkstorm. Would you agree that there has been a cross pollination of ideas and focus between the projects in recent times particularly since the two Folkstorm studio albums were recorded back in 1999 around the same time as N.B.S? Of course a similarity between the two bands cant be avoided. "Information Blitzkrieg" and "Victory or death" were both recorded at the same time and are both about war. They were recorded after NBS, and maybe I still had some of the "NBS-vibe" fresh in mind...

In that you can detect fleeting sounds and samples also utilised in MZ. 412's work, in actual fact how much overlap is soundsource? Hmm... some of the MZ. 412 samples have been re-used for Folkstorm, yes... Consider it a fun game for the real fan to find them!

Considering the raw and basic sound construction of Folkstorm's sound, is this back to basics sound reflected in the recording techniques you use? What encompasses a Folkstorm recording session? A Folkstorm recording session is a real, violent, freeform and loud experience. I usually team up with Ulvtharm (who nowadays owns our fully equipped studio Nar Mattaru) who is the perfect sound engineer for this kind of music. We start of making the basics - drones, samples etc. Then we turn up the volume really high and just "go with the flow" or whatever you call it. Lots of sweat and beer are usually present. Then when we are done we sit back and listen to the result - what you can hear on the albums is what is left after we take away the parts that I didn't turn out good enough. The process is very freeform and improvised - far from the perfectionist production of MZ. 412.

The first two albums 'Information Blitzkrieg' & 'Victory or Death' (although not released in sequence) were recorded with you being the solo member, however the live recording CD 'Hurtmusic' is credited to both Mr and Mrs Nordvargr. Who is this mysterious Mrs Nordvargr and is she now a full time member of the group and what is her primary role? My wife. She hates power electronics and industrial music, but still she likes to add some noise to the production... She is a member through marriage whether she likes it or not, muahahaha....

In that you have coined a slogan for Folkstorm 'No Politics, No Religion, No Standard' yet you utilise a myriad of samples, recordings, voices, images and symbols that could be construed as being extremely controversial, to what extent is the use of this slogan a diversionary tactic? It is not diversion... Folkstorm doesn't take a stand - it is freeform. I just observe the world I live in and use it as a source. It might sound like a cliché but it is the truth...

Much of the sampled dialogue segments within the Folkstorm compositions are so drastically altered and distorted actual deciphering of the message is mostly a lost cause. Are the samples used to convey a direct message or used as a source of inspiration to how the composition will sound? The samples are used as an extra voice or instrument - its part of the concept... however in the future there will be less samples. I'm working more in a "man vs machine" way now...

How much do you view Folkstorm in a cultural sense and the message you want to bring to your audience if not a message to the wider general populous? Folkstorm is part of modern art and culture even though I bet that the "established" cultural elite of Sweden would hate it. My mission is to infiltrate and contaminate it all - that is the meaning of the Culturecide movement. I have a lot of ideas that I plan to execute this year. Watch out!

'Culturecide' is another concept you have coined in relation to Folkstorm. Can you expand on its meaning or should it simply be interpreted on face value? I think I just answered that. You might wonder about what these "Culturecide Campaigns" are about... I can tell you about one which you all can do - Download some 20 modern megahits (Madonna, Backstreet Boys, whatever) on the web and then modify the files... make sure that the first halfminute or so still sounds like it is supposed to be. Then add your favourite Folkstorm track. So far some 1000 people have downloaded hidden (and rare exclusive) Folkstorm tracks disguised as popmusic with Napster. Some of them are very mad, trust me...

Folkstorm has played live a couple of times in 2000, one of which became the 'Hurtmusic' CD. I am assuming that it easier to perform Folkstorm material live due to the raw essence of the sound - yet how much of what you have performed live has been improvised? When we recorded HURTMUSIC I guess that half of the sources were prerecorded. Usually I prerecord the rhythmic parts and use them as a "skeleton" for the performance. The rest is mostly live improvisations. I like the freedom it gives me. The combined live performance with MZ. 412 in Rostock, Germany was different. There we used more tapes and prerecorded stuff and used the stage more as a battlefield/temple... lots of fire, swedish soil and dirt. **While for the most part Folkstorm comes across as an intensely serious project, notwithstanding, one track off 'Culturecide Campaigns' sees a rather well know pop song gets quite massacred in somewhat humorous style. How do you view this assessment of humour within the concept of Folkstorm?** As I said before, Folkstorm can be anything... That particular track also appears in a different version on the split mCD with Lefthandeddecision (later this year from Troniks). You cant always be deadly serious about everything...

Again referencing 'Hurtmusic' emblazoned on the cover is an image of yourself in a Christ like pose. Is this picture a symbolic offering of yourself as a martyr to your beliefs? No. I dont feel like a martyr... it is more a symbolic representation of the restrained anger that dwells inside of me. Chained by the morals and beliefs of a decaying society ruled by fools...

In an interview of yours I wanted to quote a specific segment. "I simply observe the truth and expose it to the masses" (Letters from the Nuovo Europae Vol 1#). What truth are you referring to? Likewise to what extent it the 'truth' a defunct concept, given that there can only ever be the one truth - being that according to an individuals own perceptions, thus relegating 'truth' to being not more than a strongly held opinion? I think I was misinterpreted... it should be "I simply observe the reality around me and expose...". What I mean is that Folkstorm is a reflection of todays society - it observes, manipulates, lies, entertains and worries people, but it never takes a stand.

On an alternate yet related topic, there was talk of you starting a vinyl only record label. How is this new planned endeavour progressing at the moment? It is at a complete standstill. My life has become very busy the past year and I haven't found the time to make anything else than plans... the first release on HoloGram will be a LP with Survival Unit, hopefully during 2001. The planned Folkstorm/MZ. 412 collaboration will not be released thru HoloGram.

What new or old groups would you give the Nordvargr/ Folkstorm stamp of approval? If you mean my personal favorites they would be Slogun, Judas Iscariot, Survival Unit, Nod, BDN, Marduk and Brainbombs... at the moment.

Lastly given the quite prolific output of Folkstorm in a short amount of time, is this release schedule going to continue? What can we expect in the near future? Folkstorm - Noisient 10" (OEC) and Folkstorm vs Lefthandeddecision (Troniks) is probably out during the first half of 2001. I have already one album recorded but it is not mastered yet... when, how etc it will be released is yet to be determined. Also, a still unnamed cooperation with Slogun will probably be out later this year. I am also discussing a vinyl project with the new English label Kokampf... we'll see what happens... anyway, Folkstorm will not slow down...



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vox barbara

Vox Barbara might not be a highly known name at the moment, yet those who have heard the project all seem to have exclusively positive comments to make. While this situation could be construed to amount to partial obscurity, this should not prevent you from checking out Frank Smith's diverse experimental sonic collages that via containing an element of directional structure and rhythm have created uniquely dark atmospherics. Given I immensely enjoyed the tribally tinged debut CD 'The Five Sences' and with the second more clinically/ digitally tinged CD '(de)constructing ghosts' having recently been released, I thought it was about time I grilled Frank Smith with a few questions.

How long was it after you started listening to experimental soundscapes/ dark ambience that you decided to try producing your own compositions? Likewise what were some of the artists that birthed your interest in experimental styles of music? Some of the first artists I listened to were Zoviet France, The Hafler Trio, Nocturnal Emissions, Muslingauze...but the desire to produce the music and my exposure to it really seemed to happen at the same time. In a lot of cases, I'd read about what artists were doing and be very drawn to it based on the descriptions, then maybe go ahead and do some of my own experiments, and when I finally heard the artists' work I had read about, I'd be amazed at how similar it sounded to what I was producing... Some things did influence me directly; for instance, John Watermann's "Calcutta Gas Chamber" was a big influence on the overall feel (and conceptual nature) of the first vox barbara album, "The Five Senses." But more often than not, it would be more a case of, as I said, reading about something and being drawn to it or having someone tell me after hearing my work, "oh, you really should check out so and so..." and finding out there were others out there with whom I was already on the same wavelength...

Both of your albums have been released on your own label Little Man Records, which was created out of necessity in that no other label was interested in taking on the task. Particularly what was the label reaction like to you latest work '(de)constructing ghosts', even if none came forth with an offer to release it? The label reaction was kind of baffling, frankly: almost utter silence! Very few labels that I sent advance copies of 'Ghosts' to even responded at all... One reason it's so baffling is because the reviews, etc. I've read of 'ghosts' have been so overwhelmingly positive, peppered with comments like, "I can't believe no label has picked this up..." In retrospect, I'm happy, though, because releasing things myself, while a big expense and lots of work, gives me total artistic control over the packaging, etc., which is very important to me...so the self-releasing is probably going to continue in the future.

Although this question is a tad biased (considering the glowing review I have written of the latest CD), I wanted to ask what public response has been to the CD compared to that of label reactions? Oops, guess I already answered that one! But yes, it's been very, very positive...it feels really good when people appreciate what you've set out to do and obviously have taken the time to really listen and get inside it; when they actually "get it"!

Referencing '(de)constructing ghosts' this utilised some subversive computer technology in the form of what is known as 'Ligea' sound analysis software. Can you provide some background to how you obtained this and what is the premise of its operational intent? Well, I was lucky enough to download it from the old "Anarchy N' Explosives" underground FTP site before it

disappeared...from what I've read, the software was developed on the same principles as the Kirlian Camera, i.e. if you bombard an object—in this case, sounds—with the right stimuli, you'll uncover the nature of the underlying "energy" of the object, and originally had some sort of "investigative," spy-like sort of intent. As to exactly how it works, I'm not a programmer or any sort of expert in such matters, so for all I know, it could be a total sham...e.g. it could just be a sophisticated audio-processing/mangling software...but whatever it is, I like the sonic results, which to me is what counts.

Despite using this software to create the new album, what is your personal opinion in regard to the validity of its claims? Like I said, I'm really not sure...for me, concept is such a big part of art, so just the IDEA that it might do what it says, that it might somehow draw out the history of an object, the voices or energies trapped in it, and release them as the sonic "ghosts" of the object's past, is thrilling enough to me, and really enriches the bizarre sounds it produces. It ultimately doesn't matter to me if it really does what it's supposed to, you know? The concept has stimulated my imagination as far as interpreting or contextualizing the sound sources I selected and then processed through it, and it seems to have stimulated the imaginations of many listeners to, based on the comments I've received...that's enough for me!

Around the time '(de) constructing ghosts' was released you had many positive things to say about the mastering work Phil Easter did for the album. How much did the mastering alter the finished recording to released result? Phil did several great things to that material. Some were strictly "mechanical;" i.e. he cleaned up some very annoying (to me) background noise present in some of the source material, enabling one to focus much more clearly on the primary sounds...it's amazing what he was able to do in that regard, especially on the track "Ritual Dissection," which was based on construction site sounds and marred by some annoying microphone noise, which he pretty much totally removed. And then through equalization and other magic, he just gave the overall material a lot more "punch." The other thing he did that pleased me so much was to suggest and execute a number of cross-fades, where one track flows seamlessly into another track, a kind of built in "dj mix" feel, if you will...that kind of work is to me more artistic than mechanical. I think Phil has a great feel for that stuff (just listen to the old Stone Glass Steel albums), and it was a great unexpected benefit to his overall mastering package. Given the use of this software, how did this alter your creative process compared to those you may have employed on your first CD 'the five senses'? Are you albums primarily spliced together digitally on a PC? The way I worked on both albums was pretty



much the same: source material was sampled into a Macintosh (a UNIX-based workstation in the case of 'Ghosts'), then loops were layered on a four-track and then eventually mixed down to DAT. The only difference with 'Ghosts' was, all processing was done by Ligea, as opposed to by various shareware audio processing programs and stomp-box effects as in the case of 'The Five Senses.' The real creation and building, for me, comes in the collaging process of layering and fading the loops in and out on the four track...knowing when to bring what up, to play what against what, when to drop things out...and using repetition to build a trance-like state...that's really what the vox barbara project is all about.

The debut CD was also rather conceptual, surrounding a 1797 writing of Anaitre Tellsos on the five senses and the potential ability for humans to experience the world on much higher levels that the common held sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Can you expand on the basis of this literally inspiration and also how this related to the musical compositions created for 'the five senses' CD? What drew me to Tellsos' novel was how he imagined a sensory world so opposed to and in contrast with our own, along with the notion that it's just barely submerged underneath our day-to-day "mundane" perceptions. So what I tried to do musically with "The Five Senses" was to use very mundane, everyday (household) objects and by processing and looping their sounds, bring out something very bizarre and "otherworldly."

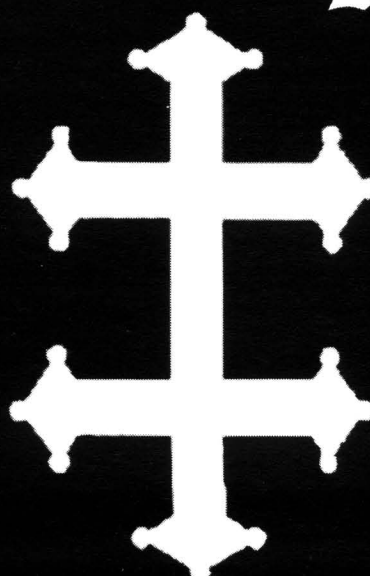
Given your first CD encompassed tribal influenced experimental soundscapes and the second CD was much more clinically and technologically sounding experimental soundscapes I was wondering what direction will you take future recordings in? I think probably some combination of the two extremes...though ultimately more toward the organic end of the spectrum. Certainly the rather cold and digital feel of 'Ghosts' was in large part a function of the Ligea software and the specific kinds of things it does to sounds...so while I may use it again in small amounts in the future, the "tribal" elements and the coaxing of the extraordinary out of ordinary sources through repetition and rhythm is my main goal with vox barbara.

In that I find Vox Barbara to be somewhat of an anomaly due to there being very few artists that have a similar sound, who would you consider to be like minded artists or even comparable sounding projects? Well, I just express what I feel, there's never really an attempt to sound "like" anyone, which is I guess why it sounds unique! There are a number of people doing maybe one thing to which I feel a kinship but not others; you know, artists whom I may not sound like but with whom I feel a like-minded spirit in some aspect, maybe the choice of source material, the overall feel, the rhythmic elements...some people with whom I feel varying degrees of kinship and to whom I listen a lot are Contagious Orgasm, Harry Bertoia, John Watermann, old Zoviet France, Templegarden, old Deutsch Nepal, The Moon Lay Hidden Beneath a Cloud...none of them are really "similar sounding" to vox barbara, but all have at least one aspect of their music to which I'm drawn or feel in kinship to.

Final words/ thoughts? To anyone trying to produce dark ambient/ritual/experimental music out there: true art is a window onto another world, a way out of this predictable and mundane realm into uncharted territory. If what you're doing sounds a lot like the latest release from [insert favourite label name here], then you're probably still planted a bit too firmly in this world...fuck genres, open that window!



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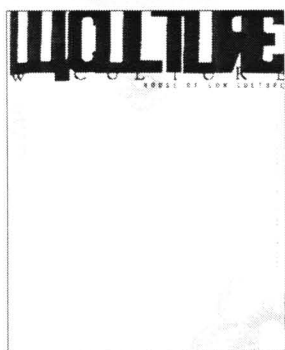
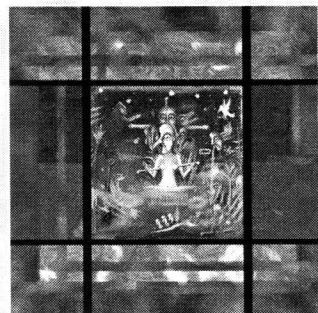


As All Die "Time of War and Conflict" CD

Apocalyptic Folk from Clint Listing and Greg Ball. Following a well-received split release, As All Die's debut full-length shows that this is truly a project on the rise. Melodic hate sure to be embraced by the misanthropist in all of us.

Chaos AS Shelter "Midnight Prayer/Illusion" DCD

Two CD's of dark ambient music from Israel. Chaos AS Shelter blend deep, ominous drones with the ethnic influences of the region. Utilizing somewhat of a musique concret approach, Vadim Gusis crafts some of the most interesting sounds in dark/experimental music.

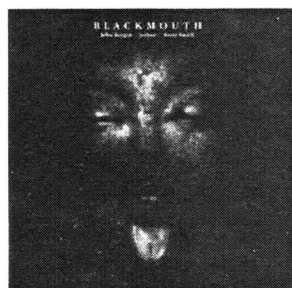
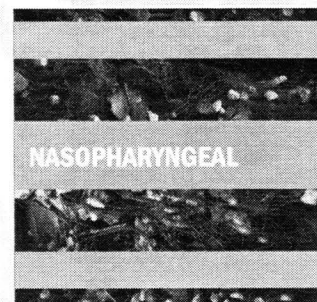


House of Low Culture "Submarine Immersion Techniques Vol.1" CD

Welcome to the excellent debut by Aaron Turner's (Isis/Hydra Head Records) House of Low Culture. "Submarine Immersion Techniques" is a psychedelic concoction made up of droning guitars and catchy riffing. Though noisier elements are applied, HOLC maintains a powerfully relaxing mood.

Nasopharyngeal "Endless" CD

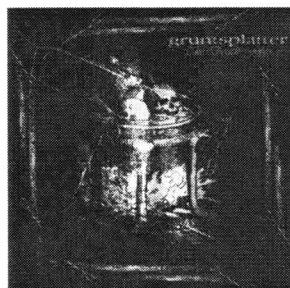
"Endless", the initial offering by Nasopharyngeal, is an improvisational piece performed by Brendan Krause (Metropolis Records) and his enigmatic partner 'the priest'. Refreshingly old-school, beats and constant sonic flux make this an impressive listen capable of drawing you further and further into it's madness.



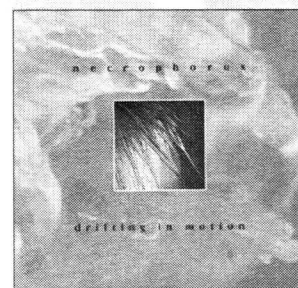
Blackmouth "ST" CD



**Dreams In Exile
"Since Long Before" CD**



**Gruntsplatter
"The Death Fires" CD**



**Necrophorus
"Drifting in Motion" CD**

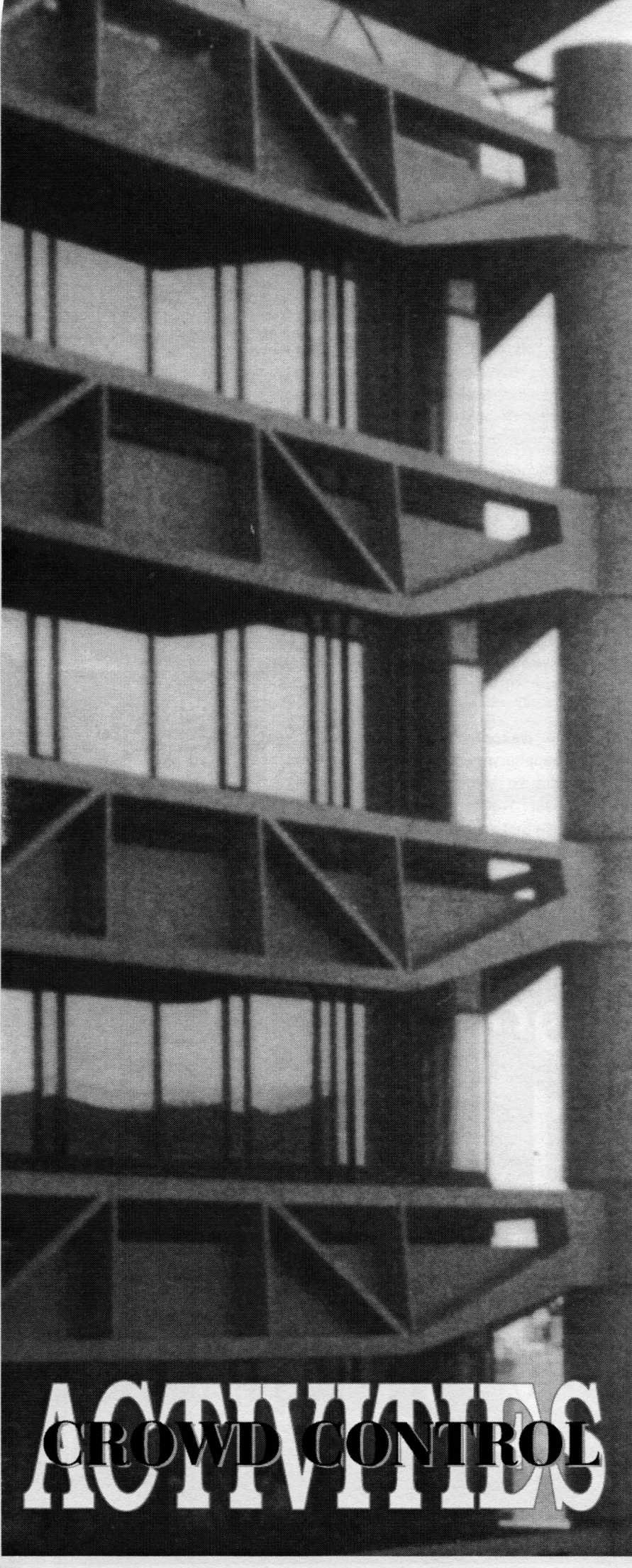
CROWD CONTROL ACTIVITIES

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The American label Crowd Control Activities has been kicking around for some years now, constantly solidifying their profile via releasing a diverse range of music from the general ambient/ industrial underground. Label boss and sole operator James Grell enlightened me on matters involving the label and other associated topics....

Prior to actually launching Crowd Control Activities, did the idea for starting a label surface quite some time earlier? How involved or interested were you in the underground that ultimately lead to the decision to birth CCA? I have wanted to start a label since I was in High School. At that time I was way into punk and grind. That's the kind of label I envisioned doing. About 7 years ago I started getting into the dark experimental stuff. So when I finally got the gumption to start a label I chose the ambient/noise type genre to work in. I kind of saw myself doing both actually (as evidenced by the Pissed Happy Children CD). For whatever reason though I haven't expanded into the hardcore direction beyond that release.

How tough was the task to convince other underground labels and distributors that you had serious intensions for the label? That wasn't really that difficult. I had arranged for my first release to be the Hybrids "Ein Phallischer Gott" CD. Hybrids are pretty well known and the disc had a good looking layout so I think it was obvious when people saw the disc that I was serious.

I guess it has to be asked. What exactly does the label title mean - any strange story to how it eventuated? Well, good question. I kind of see it having two meanings. One being that the type of music I am releasing isn't for everyone. So the notion of a crowd isn't something I associate with bands like Brume and Dissecting Table. The other concept being the belief that most of the problems the world faces have a lot to do with overpopulation. The number of people on this planet is just killing the Earth. I'm not so much an environmentalist, but the effects are noticeable in so many ways.

Power electronics, death industrial, dark ambient, ethereal atmospherics, electronica, experimental etc. - the list goes on as to the styles of albums that CCA has associated themselves with via releases (and the extent of styles is almost as diverse as the review section of Spectrum!). How do you go about deciding what items you want to release on your label? I have tried to do a variety of things from day one. If you look at my first five releases it's clear that none will be confused with the others. I don't really want to have a label "sound". My tastes are fairly broad and I see the Crowd Control aesthetic as a representation of those tastes. I don't think it really occurred to me that people might like Alio Die but not like ConSono until long after I started CCA. I want my label to offer different sounds for different moods. I just look for bands I like and that have something to offer in the way of rounding out the roster.

Do you have a set number of albums pressed up for each release? What does a standard CCA deal encompass for the artists you deal with? Runs are usually 1000. Bands either get copies or part of the profits. I usually let them decide which they prefer. No matter what though, they get some copies.

Also how much of the CCA back catalogue is out of print and are all of your releases limited to the initial print runs? The only titles out of print are the Hybrids CD and the Svasti-ayanam "Sanklesa" CD. Most titles are not really limited, but they don't necessarily move enough copies to worry about pressing more.

In your view when did Crowd Control Activities first achieve momentum in gaining noticeable interest of your outputs? Well, I don't know that I feel I have really gained any noticeable momentum. I don't think I have really experienced any rush of interest. I do well enough to get by but to me it's always a struggle.

Are there specific countries that have shown the greatest interest in CCA material or does it differ between releases? I have traditionally done most of my business in the US. But if something goes well it tends to go well worldwide. The slower

CROWD CONTROL ACTIVITIES

titles are slow regardless.

While many of your releases have encompassed albums from established (or at least known) names, yet more recently you seem to be trying to gain a specific focus for the label in cultivating an association between CCA and multiple albums from newer projects. What are your views on the pro and cons of working with established names over raising the profile of new artists under the recognition of one label? Interesting that you've noticed that. When I began Crowd Control I really wanted to work with artists whose music had excited me about these types of sounds in the first place. That's why I contacted Hybryds, Brume, Dissecting Table, Alio Die, Inanna, Consono, Peter Andersson. After having the opportunity to release albums by some of my favorites, I decided to make more of a conscious effort to work with newer projects. At this point I would rather concentrate on establishing artists like Gruntsplatter and Tertium Non Data, with releases coming up by Chaos as Shelter and As All Die. The pros of working with established names include the opportunity to be associated with projects you have respected and also getting more immediate attention for a young label. The cool thing about helping to establish something new is that one can take a little more pride in the involvement. Also, I like the idea of having the image of band and label tied together. When people think of Gruntsplatter I want them to think of Crowd Control and vice versa. An artist like Dissecting Table has worked with a number of labels so it really isn't possible to cultivate that same type of relationship.

What are your personal thoughts on the current state of the scene, in that there seems to have been an increase in releases and labels over the past two years? On the up-side, that would seem to indicate a great deal of interest in the scene. The drawback of course is that there are that many more releases for people to choose from without really having any more money to spend. It wasn't that long ago I was just starting out and thereby competing with the labels that previously existed so I can't complain. I think there is room for everybody and it's great that more artists have the chance to find an audience.

Likewise what would you consider are the biggest opportunities and or challenges for the current scene? Like any aspect of art and entertainment, there is always the chance things can get stale. I think that there are some great new projects with quite a bit to offer so I don't see things running dry any time soon. As for opportunities, I don't know that there is anything huge on the horizon. I don't think these genres will explode in popularity. But who knows, anything can happen.

Knowing that you also work at Relapse Records / Release Entertainment, I am assuming that CCA is not a profitable enough venture for you to live off on its own. Yet is the label profitable in any sense other than it being self supporting? (and while it would be great to release products in the underground if money were not on object, however sadly this is simply not the case). Working at Relapse (the world's finest extreme music label) is definitely what pays the bills. Crowd Control doesn't really make me any money. On the other hand, I don't lose money either. Hell, I don't know where the money goes. How about Spectrum? Are you in the black or in the red so far? *(ED: as it stands currently there is no way I could even come close to making a 'living' off Spectrum and likewise there are no real dollars to count – but on the flipside I am no longer losing money and Spectrum does allow me to adequately feed my excessive music addiction!)*

What is your proudest release you have been associated with to date as opposed those new projects you would nominate and being worthy to look out for? (be they signed to CCA or not). That's a difficult question. I have always been proud of the Brume disc. Early on though I probably played the ConSono album more than anything else. Taking everything into consideration (music/packaging/ and the fact that Swans are one of my favorite bands ever) I would have to say the Blackmouth CD is the one I am most proud of. Things I have heard lately that i like that are not CCA related are Bad Sector, Herbst9, Coph Nia. Fortunately for me the best dark ambient record i have heard in some time was a demo sent to CCA. Needless to say i quickly jumped on it. It's a project by Andrea Bellucci (of Red Sector A) called Subterranean Source. I can't wait to release it.

If you had to pick a few albums that you wished you had released (could be of any genre, style or era) what would those be? Neurosis "Souls at Zero" and "Enemy of the Sun", Slayer "Reign in Blood", Swans "White Light From the Mouth of Infinity" Napalm Death "Scum", Dirty Rotten Imbeciles "Dealing With It", the list goes on....

In that most labels at some point tackle the obligatory compilation, CCA has not ventured down this path as yet. Is this something we could expect in the future? Any ideas for concepts of themes? I did put out the

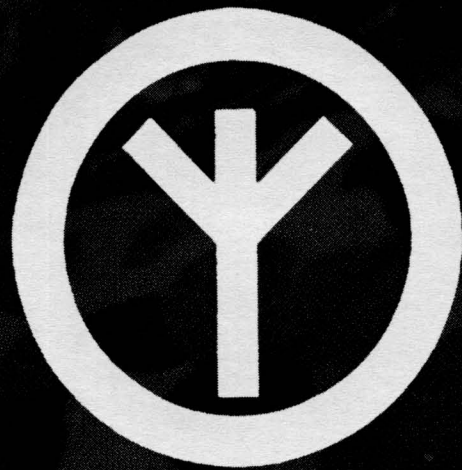
"Sound of Sadism" comp, *(ED: ops...I forgot about that one!)* which in my opinion is as good as any power electronic comp out there (thanks to Jon/Malsonus for putting it together). But funny you would ask, since I do have another compilation coming up. It will be titled "Funeral Songs". the theme of course being songs that the artists feel convey a mood appropriate for a real or imagined funeral. Contributors include: 27, Gruntsplatter, Agnivok, 2 Raison D'etre tracks, Shinjuku Thief, House of Low Culture, Chaos as Shelter, Dreams in Exile, Tertium Non Data, Alio Die, etc. It will actually be a split release with Release Entertainment. I hope to have it out in May, June at the latest.

Also lavishly packaged vinyl collects items seem to be quite popular of late with the Loki Foundation's Saturn Gnosis 2 x 10" delux box set setting the bar very high (and not to mention that it is ALSO a compilation). Are these types of release you would consider tackling - or even vinyl releases? I have embraced the digital age. Nothing against vinyl, but it is unlikely I will ever release anything on that format. I think that the titles on Crowd Control tend to look pretty good compared to many of the other labels out there doing similar things. I think that Cold Meat always does a good job as well as Cold Spring. I prefer jewel boxes to digipaks and that's why most things I do are in jewel boxes. Wait until you see the Chaos as Shelter double CD I have coming out. It will be a sharp looking disc. I hate to call these elaborate limited items gimmickry, but to some extent it is. As you pointed out, there are more labels so it is tougher to draw attention to one's products. I just want my releases to be solid instead of purposely setting out to create a collector situation.

Lastly given that label bosses often have their own musical creations, can we ever expect a musical project of James Grell to be wheeled out into the public arena for scrutiny and comment? No. But here's a label discography (all compact discs):

- Hybryds "Ein Phallischer Gott"
- Brume "Drafts of Collisions"
- Atrax Morgue "Slush of a Maniac"
- Alio Die "The Hidden Spring"
- Dissecting Table "Into the Light"
- Discordance "Supremacy"
- ConSono "Ignoto Deo"
- Svasti-ayanam "Sanklesa"
- PHC "Pissed Playground"
- Hollow Earth "Dog Days of the Holocaust"
- Negru Voda / third EYE split
- 5000 Spirits "Mesmeric Revelation"
- Alio Die / Antonio Testa "Healing Herb's Spirit"
- Tertium Non Data "The Third is Not Given"
- Dissecting Table "Kaiboudai" 3 CD set
- V/A "Sound of Sadism"
- Inanna "signal/or/minimal"
- Necrophorus "Drifting in Motion"
- Gruntsplatter "The Death Fires"
- Dreams in Exile "Since Long Before"
- Blackmouth "S/T"
- House of Low Culture "Submarine Immersion Techniques Vol.1"
- Nasopharyngeal "Endless"
- Chaos as Shelter "Midnight Prayer / Illusion" double CD
- As All Die "Time of War and Conflict"
- V/A "Funeral Songs"

DEATH IN JUNE



If there is any project that needs no introduction Death in June would be it, but more to the point how could I within a few mere sentences adequately sum up the 20 influential and controversial years the group has been active? Regardless, Douglas P was kind enough to go beyond the call of duty in answering my queries and in the process creating the longest feature interview in Spectrum's short history. Either way to if Douglas P is a household name for some, or remains as an enigma to others, this feature provides and engrossing and intriguing read.

To start with your most recent past, Albin Julius (of Der Blutharsch infamy) featured prominently on the two previous Death in June albums (being 'Take Care and Control' and 'Operation Hummingbird'), but I believe by mutual agreement this collaboration within the framework of Death in June has now ceased. What are your thoughts of the new direction that Albin brought the project that is essentially your personal essence? The whole collaboration with Albin came about because Albin was visiting Australia at the same time as I was and it seems too good an opportunity to miss to see if we could come up with something in the studio. We had already spent time together in Europe but we hadn't worked together, although there had been an attempt. I was aware of his previous group '...the moon lay hidden beneath a cloud' from its very first release in the early 1990's and I was intrigued by it. It looked beautiful, and different, and sounded equally so! However, it wasn't until December 1996 when he came up and introduced himself backstage at a Death in June/ Boyd Rice, Strength Through Joy performance in Munich that I first met him. It quickly transpired that we were a mutual appreciation society and he, Boyd and a Croatian friend of mine, as well as myself, took off to a famous beer cellar in the city. After that we knew we really got on and kept in contact. Albin in fact organised some concerts in Vienna and travelled with us to Zagreb, Croatia the following year and then, once again apparently by chance, I found myself with an Australian friend staying in Vienna for Christmas 1997. Anyway, Albin and I went around a lot of great places together and became quite good friends and I was ready to do some recording with '...the moon lay hidden beneath a cloud'. Sadly, whenever this seemed likely to happen Elizabeth, his partner in t.m.l.h.b.a.c became ill or was 'busy' with something or other. So the planned recordings never took place and as Albin later explained he was pleased they didn't. 'Der Blutharsch' already existed and as Elizabeth and he were soon to split he would have found it difficult to know what to do with any recordings he had done with me. Should they be t.m.l.h.b.a.c or Der Blutharsch? As the recordings did not take place I suppose that got him out of that quandary but it still left an unsatisfied thirst. Albin visiting Australia in the following February soon quenched that. By the beginning of 1998 I had already begun recording what I thought was going to be the follow up to "Rose Clouds of Holocaust"/ "Black Whole of Love" which was, and still is "the concrete fountain". I knew a new direction was demanded by the life force of Death in June and I had experimented with different ways of letting this loose. But, then Albin arrived! We began writing material almost immediately and it was so natural that wherever it decided to go was the place DIJ was heading for. Of course Albin brought with him his unmistakable style and this is precisely what I loved because it was created almost entirely within the environment that I provided for him. "Take Care and Control" was a great cocktail of the both of us and equally so "Operation Hummingbird" which we wrote together in the space between concerts in Australia 1999. But you don't always go to bed and/ or live with your drinking partners. I wanted the 'summer' and 'winter' from Albin, my 2 favorite seasons, and I'm sure I got them. Albin was only ever meant to be a guest collaborator in Death in June and that was discussed before we even started work on "OH". Death in June has always been in flux from the very outset so I didn't need to explain further than that. When Patrick Leagas, one of the founding members left the group in 1985 I swore then that I would never have another 'permanent' member in DIJ and would only ever work with other leaders or hired hands. Albin Julius is another leader with much else on his plate besides Death in June. But, that doesn't mean we will never work again together in some form or another. If our separate careers allow it then live work could still happen. Although we rehearsed for it "Operation Hummingbird" has for instance, never been performed live. When the big Leipzig festival collapsed in the summer of 2000 we lost our chance to showcase that which works brilliantly as a live piece. Outside of DIJ

we have in fact been recording together with Boyd Rice on a project called "Wolf Pact". But, more of that later.

Do you think these two most recent albums with a slightly different slant have seen a resurgence of interest in Death in June or even that you have attached new listeners that may not have paid a great deal of attention to the group before? I don't think there needed to be a resurgence of interest in Death in June as that presupposes that the interest had gone away which it hadn't. However, I do think that there has been an increase in new listeners to both the work of DIJ and Der Blutharsch because of our connections. But, then again I think that was happening anyway, partly due to the amount of touring I/ we were doing in the late 1990's and partly because that has always happened throughout the history of Death in June. It's an organic, growing 'thing' and as naturally as some people loose interest and fall by the wayside others join the march with fresh attitudes etc. Long may that continue.

Notwithstanding that the majority of your titles generally either have a poetic flair (or otherwise underlying irony), your upcoming album 'All Pigs Must Die' is a rather blunt and direct title. While anyone who has followed the recent Death in June saga over the past 12-18 months would know that the title is not referring to the police, I wanted to ask your thoughts of this perceived direct and blunt approach? For whatever reason I spent a lot of time last year listening to George Harrison's "All Things Must Pass" album. Coupled with him writing the "piggies" track on the Beatles "White Album", which was one of the so called inspirations behind the Manson Family's Tate Labianca killings, some how the title "All Pigs Must Die" came into being. So, it's not quite straight forward. The fact that I have spent the best part of the last 18 months dealing with the utter shit of the world who wouldn't know the words "honesty" or "honour" if they came smashing down on their piggy heads with the force of a hammer is neither here nor there.

Again discussing the new album, I believe this sees a new collaboration with Andreas Ritter of the German neo-folk project Forseti. Firstly I remember reading that part of the reason for the quite lengthy hiatus after the 'Rose Clouds of Holocaust' album was that you thought you had brought your apocalyptic folk phase to a sort of conclusion and were unsure where to take Death in June next - with Albin Julius eventually answering this quandary. Given that Forseti is quite a neo-folk oriented project, where has this new collaboration taken the Death in June sound - if not back to the sound characterised on 'What Ends When the Symbols Shatter?' and 'Rose Clouds of Holocaust'? Forseti sound nothing like Death in June so I never thought for a moment that collaborating with Andreas Ritter would drag DIJ back onto well worn paths. Forseti had really impressed me at the few concerts they've supported Death in June at in Germany so at the last one in Kassel July 200 I had a new song which I thought would sound great with the addition of accordion which I've never had on a recording and which Andreas plays very well. So, after a brief explanation from the German promoter, because Andreas doesn't speak English too well and my German is very basic, I ran him through the song that is now called "The Enemy Within". Within just a few minutes it was working out really well backstage and the plan was to perform it live that night. Unfortunately, the performance was later cancelled by the club owner so it was never performed in public that evening. However, back at the hotel where most of the groups were staying we did eventually perform it in the foyer to the otherwise depressed members of the various bands. Even Eric Konofal from Les Joyaus de la Princesse joined in on drums and eventually the whole thing spilled out onto the carpark where an impromptu, stripped down acoustic performance took place for about ½ hour. It was very magical and very inspiring and it got me thinking! With the exception of some e-bow and electronic effects on the second half of the album "All Pigs Must Die" is extremely stripped down and certainly doesn't feature any of the string or keyboard arrangements that "Symbols" and Rose Clouds" have and most people tend to forget about when they're talking about 'apocalyptic folk' or 'neo folk' or whatever they wish to bracket those albums into. There's a lot more than just guitar on them but "All Pigs Must Die" is basically acoustic guitar, accordion and trumpet. There a particular type of German music called 'Schlager' which is very popular in beer halls and the like. Some of the direction of "All Pigs..." reminds me of that! Maybe?

You have regularly praised the facilities of the Big Sound Studios in Adelaide (Australia) yet the new album was recorded in

Germany I believe. While the reason would seem obvious considering the Forseti collaboration, however how did you find recording over there considering you seems to have quite an affinity for the studio back in Adelaide? The latest album was in fact recorded in 3 different countries in 3 different studios basically because that was where the 3 different musicians involved in it were based. It started off at Big Sound Studio in the Adelaide hills then went onto Geyer Studios in Germany where Andreas assed his bits and then the recording was really finished in Jacobs Studios, England where I've done a lot of work in the past. That is where Campbell finally added his trumpet parts. I enjoy working in familiar surroundings and over the 20 years existence of DIJ I've only ever worked in 4 studios: Alaska Studios and the Greenhouse in London which were owned by Garry Glitter, Jacobs Studios and Big Sound. I'm Lucky enough to find a place and engineer that I'm comfortable with then I stick with them but that obviously wasn't possible for my work in Germany but with the exception of one song called "Flies Have Their House" I didn't actually do any recording there. My job was really directing and producing Andreas. Regardless, the atmosphere at Geyer was really helpful so it didn't cause any undue stresses. Not for me at least! I think that Andreas was more nervous of me then the studio surroundings!!

Now that I have had the opportunity to hear a pre-release copy of the new album, I wanted to ask how you arrived at the decision to create an album of with two clear halves and two very distinct sound frameworks?(consisting of the acoustic 'Schlager' music as you refer to it, and the more experimental noise industrial pieces). Likewise were some of these noise industrial oriented pieces actually left over from the 'We Said Destroy' recording sessions? No, the more experimental material wasn't left over from the completely separate 'We Said Destroy' sessions, although the thought crossed my mind whether to include that on the CD of "All Pigs Must Die" because it does blend in with that side of the album. With the exception of "Ride Out", which was the last track I wrote for the project, all that type of material was recorded and mixed before I'd finished the "Schlager Folk" songs. I went to a realm, declared my intent, gave an offering and these were the results. The whole album could have been an all out "industrial assault" for want of a better description but, I kept being pulled back to the idea that had formulated in my mind after working out "The Enemy Within" with Andreas Ritter. In fact, the original idea was to call every song "We Said Destroy" and work on different versions of that theme. Eventually that drove me and Dave Lokan, the sound engineer, completely mad so I opened up more and let the album dictate itself as usual. The theme and purpose behind it remains the same, however.

Notwithstanding that you have previously created sound collages on selected Death In June albums, the noise pieces of 'All Pigs Must Die' are much more electronic and distortion based(but certainly expertly executed). Is experimental (and potentially improvised?) industrial noise something you have been dabbling in for some time? My first recordings in 1974-75 were of that style. An old school friend of mine and I recorded different tape machines and record players all playing at the same time, some of them backwards, and then added live vocals and other instrumentation over the top of that. Much of it worked out really well and it went on to form the sound track to a couple of short films called "The Rose Garden" and, I think, "L'Ange" or "The Angel" or something like that. During some of the early performances by Death In June some of those films, along with specially shot slides etc., used to be projected onto us and over us as we played. Patrick and I had found a shop in the back end of nowhere in London that sold old Royal Air Force and SAS snow camouflage suits along with a MASSIVE camouflage net that was used to cover Chieftain tanks. The white of the snow suits let the images play off and on our bodies really well and when we draped the net across the front of the stage the images of the slides and films used to be broken up or distorted or look like they were weird scenes within a forest. I thought it was really good and different and it was obviously the beginning of Death In June's association with camouflage. Towards the end of the original line-up we were performing 2 different sets during the same event-one more experimental and one more like the studio recordings of "The Guilty Have No Pride" or "Burial". There has always been those 2 sides to DIJ. As an aside to that, by chance in about 1990/91 the person who had those films and slides suddenly appeared in the pub I was drinking in, clutching a copy of Nick Cave's "The Arse Kissed The Donkey" or whatever it's called - and very surprised to see me! He had disappeared shortly after the Paris concert in January, 1984 along with all that film material. When I quizzed him about that stuff he said I could have it for 17,000 pounds but

he was on a plane to Los Angeles later that day and wouldn't be able to deal with it immediately. With that he promptly departed [never to be seen or heard from again] and I started getting harassed by a drunk who thought I was John Travolta.

Boyd Rice is a character that you have had a loose affiliation with for over 10 years now, including a number of collaborative recordings that you participated in together. This continued association sees Boyd providing spoken word introductions to a couple of the tracks on the new album, thus I wanted to ask whether these text pieces were specifically written by Boyd for the album? If this was not the case, why was the invitation to recite these pieces extended to Boyd instead of you personally handling the task? I actually write all the words on the album but shortly after writing "Tick Tock" I had the idea to ask Boyd to record his interpretations of the lyrics. With his great, creepy, radio friendly voice and his greater understanding than most of what I'm all about I thought it would be perfect. It was touch and go for awhile whether I would get them in time for the end of my recording session. Unbeknown to me Boyd was away in France working on a television documentary for Fox Television but couldn't get into a studio quick enough when he eventually found out about my request! Luckily they arrived in time for me to add them during the mastering stage which is as last moment as it can get.

Talking of the collaborative material you have produced with Boyd, the most well recognised recordings include: Boyd Rice and Friends: Music Martinis and Misanthropy CD (which also featured Michael Moynihan of Blood Axis infamy) and Scorpion Wind: Heaven Sent CD (also featuring John Murphy and has been referred to as Music Martinis and Misanthropy II). Likewise as recently as February 2001 you have finished recording with Boyd Rice and Albin Julius at Big Sound Studio's in Adelaide, Australia. How did the recording sessions pan out and what style/musical focus can we expect from this new album? Despite already having a working title of 'Wolf Pact', could this be considered as Music Martinis and Misanthropy III? Because "Music, Martinis And Misanthropy" was our first collaboration together and caused such a stir, and sold so well, everything from there on would always be perceived as mk. II, III or IV etc. Before Boyd arrived in Australia to start recording I spent weeks listening to both "MMM" and "Heaven Sent" and I was surprised at how apparently 'uncomplicated' "MMM" was in comparison to the Scorpion Wind album. I think that "Heaven Sent" is the great undiscovered classic recording of any of our works. So many people have never heard of it, yet alone heard it. It also brings back some unhappy memories about its release through World Serpent. Not only did the sleeves of the record and CD turn out differently to what I had requested but also the initial sales proved very disappointing.

To try and help counter that Boyd and I contacted WSD and asked them to put a sticker on the covers showing that it was a collaboration between him and me and we even volunteered to go into the warehouse and put them on the thousands of records and CDs that were languishing there. One of the directors would have none of that and turned down the idea of the stickers and us putting them on. The excuse, besides the extra 'expense', which would have come out of Boyd's and my own pockets anyhow, was that we would be in the way. No, it was much better to have those thousands of LPs and CDs hanging around for years in the warehouse and 'getting in the way' instead, wasn't it! So, that is exactly what happened. It sold very badly and was a financial burden around my neck until only quite recently. One of the other directors of WSD explained away the problem with "Heaven Sent" as there being always a runt in any litter. Going by his contributions to the wonderful world of music I assume he is an expert at giving birth to 'runts of the litter'!! However, "Wolf Pact" is an attempt to sweep those memories away. I think it is a successful synthesis of the styles and approaches that Boyd, Albin and myself would bring to any venture. I'm very happy with it and I don't mind if it does get referred to as "Music Martinis And Misanthropy III" because I'll see that as a form of recommendation.

With the extent of collaborations you have brought into DIJ over the years, why have you chosen this creative path other than being self sufficient with the use of session musicians? Also is there a common theme to the circumstances that lead to the various collaborations? After Patrick departed DIJ in 1985 I really had to re-evaluate what I was going to do with the group. It was a dangerous situation which I nearly didn't survive so I decided never to reply upon anyone else again but work only with other leaders who had their own groups and so therefore their own agendas separate from Death In June. My collaborations with David Tibet had already begun but that acted as a springboard for work with Rose Macdowall, Boyd Rice, John Balance and so on. Why look for a session musician when you've got all the most original talent in the world as friends? But, that really has petered out by the early 1990's more by force of circumstance rather than design. I was hardly ever in England, and when I was Tibet would be abroad, or Rose would be breeding or something like that so we just never met up and that period came to a natural end. In many ways! I've only ever worked with two session musicians; for want of a better word, in the history of Death In June and they have both been trumpet players. Since Patrick left I've never met anyone else who can play that instrument. In fact, the trumpet was nearly not included on "All

Pigs Must Die" as, unbeknown to myself, Campbell had suffered a stroke a few weeks before my arrival in England in November, 2000. Proving he was more than just a session musician he still came down to the studio and did an extremely good job although I have to admit that coaching him through what I wanted him to do did sometimes become completely surreal. Hopefully, it was some kind of music therapy for him. I know by the end of the session we were both fit to drop! A lot of information had well and truly been scrambled that day!

Talking more broadly, what are your thoughts that your initial attempt to be a 'faceless musician' (via the use of masks and uniforms) has worked in reverse whereas your most well known facemask (the Japanese white clay mask) has become an important if not integral part of Death in June iconography? And despite this, I am also sure that all Death in June fans would know your face also. Are there two versions of Douglas Pearce – the stage persona and the private persona? I think there is a difference between not wanting to be equated to the usual stable of inanities that are normally available to 'the record buying public' and being a 'faceless musician', which I'm not sure I've actually ever said I wanted to be. The use of 'props' such as masks or photographs with only backs turned towards the camera not only separate Death in June from the majority of embarrassing pap that permeates the music industry, which like it or not, I must be part of in some kind of way, but also on a very 'simplistic' level are more attractive and pleasing from a purely aesthetic aspect I also think that you might be leaping to conclusions that all DIJ fans know what I look like because the last time I performed in Munich, Germany a few years ago I had great difficulty getting back into the venue after I'd been to a beer cellar with some friends before the concert began. I didn't have any venue I.D. on me and as I tried to go through the crowds outside the doors not one person recognised me and all thought I was pushing in which resulted in a few interesting words being said! Finally the bouncers at the doors believed me and let me in. How anonymous I was I found a little creepy after so many years! The mask is, in fact, made of paper and I bought it in a shop in Venice, Italy in late 1991 and because of its constant use since then it has become part of DIJ's iconography. But, thinking about it I don't think it is just because I use it a lot in photos, on stage etc. it is also because it looks so great and so different. It does almost have a life of its own and that's fine by me. Almost all the photographers that I've done sessions with have commented upon how it doesn't appear to be me underneath it. Naturally, I don't go shopping in Woolworths wearing it so, of course, there are differences in the visual aspect of what you see on stage and what you get in my more private moments. It is, however, most definitely the same person.

To what extent is the essence of Death in June encompassed within your image? (I ask this as I have seen live images where someone has gone out of their way to photograph the clay mask sitting on the ground at the back of the stage – as if this was the true Death in June and not Douglas Pearce). My Life is my Love is my Work is my World. All that you see or hear are aspects of the essence, as you refer to it, of Death in June.

Given you seem to thrive on leaving the interpretation of Death in June up to the individual I wanted to see your opinions on two possible explanations behind facets of your aesthetic. i): the use of uniforms represents the 'state' or 'government' (in a fascist sense) and thus it is this controlling element that suppress both individual thought & action. Therefore Death in June uses ironic symbolism to present a spiritual message in an aesthetic form that represents censorship. ii) the uniform represents the personal battle



for individual freedom (be it spiritual or social) in a westernised society that mostly demands conformity (hence the inscription on the recent 'Heilige' live CD "dedicated to all those who fight in isolation" or the quote within Brown Book "It is the plague of our time, that we fight in isolation"). I think you've almost answered your own question by the way you've come up with such interesting theories about what may, or may not be, the aesthetic reasoning behind DIJ. I could pontificate about how I feel that more can be achieved in Life in an underground, camouflaged kind of way, or that to be "Hidden Among The Leaves" is the Japanese way of the warrior, or that it is some attempt at a physical manifestation of a willingness to have a link to the pathos and tragedies of the past but, I prefer to let others do that for me. I prefer to leave some doors open to some people. My Art, my Love my Life would otherwise become earthbound and that is not for me.

Over the (nearly) 20 years of Death in June's existence you have played live irregularly, yet in recent years you have been much more active on the live performance circuit. Why the recent alteration in focus towards live performances? In fact, the change came about in 1992 when after about 3 years since the last DIJ performance I decided that it was time to change tactics. Tactics which I think, in retrospect, had worked against DIJ, but had been deemed necessary at the time. I felt the need to expose Death In June to a bigger audience and was lucky enough to have the right people around me to make that possible, on both a personal and professional level. Since then there have been several major tours of Europe, a large tour of America and a few one-offs in places like Australia and New Zealand. Realistically, I caught the touring bug and despite all the numerous hassles concerned with most tours or performances I kept coming back for more. That was totally different to how both Tony Wakeford and myself felt at the beginning of Death In June. We had performed a lot with our previous group Crisis but the problems we faced with that really did get on top of us. It was a conscious decision not to take our new group out on the road very often and at the time we were happy with this approach. But, as I said earlier, I look back and think that to be so extreme possibly worked against us. The original line up of Tony, myself and Patrick Leagas worked brilliantly live and it was getting even better as we went along. The last concert performed by the original line-up in Paris in January, 1984 was one of the most interesting, unique and exciting I've ever been present at let alone performed! However, there were problems between the 3 of us and Tony departed the group shortly after. Just over a year later Patrick had also gone so logistically it became impossible to even do any live work. To this day Tony and Patrick are the best all round musicians I've ever worked with and not having them around curtailed any ideas for doing more live work. That had to wait and when the opportunity did arise again I seized it with both hands.

Do you have any special plans to mark the 20th

anniversary of Death in June (incidentally being this year 2001), or do you consider such celebrations could evoke bad omens? (as you have previously mentioned a similar reason for not documenting the early days of the group). Until this milestone had been mentioned in interviews such as this I hadn't given it any conscious thought. I have no idea when Death In June, as it was going to turn out to be, performed its first rehearsal or recorded our first release "Heaven Street". The only definite date I know is DIJ's first concert which was with The Birthday Party and Malaria on a snow-bound London night 25th November, 1981. The best celebration I could possibly think of would be to hear that a certain company that Wyrd's steadily destroying had collapsed! Collapsed owing thousands of \$'s!! Just like they owe thousands of \$'s to me right now. That would be a real cause for celebration and raising a glass or 4. Perhaps I'd even invent a new cocktail called something like 'Just Desserts' or, better still, 'But, What Ends When The Piggybank Shatters'?. In the beginning Tony, Patrick and I would celebrate the release of a record by going to a cocktail bar in London and drinking the night away. It would seem fitting to keep with tradition!

What are your thoughts on the current state of the neo-folk scene? In as much as you a sort of godfather to this movement do you have much involvement with the new generation of groups? Any there any that have particularly caught your interest? I don't know about being a Godfather to any movement but I do really like some of the new groups that are apparently connected to this genre. Forseti I've already mentioned and I have, in fact, recorded with when I was last in Germany working on "All Pigs Must Die" with the leader of the group, Andreas. I did the lyrics and sing on a new track called "Black Jena [This Time The Victim Is Desire]" which I think will either be released as a single or featured on their soon to be released new album. Outside of them, I really like the Danish group Of The Wand And The Moon, The English group Lady Morphia and, yet more German groups like Darkwood and Dies Natalis, who I remember playing a fantastic, impromptu acoustic performance in the wood that surrounded an ancient castle keep Death In June had just performed in last year in Germany. I think the new wave of neo-folk, or whatever it's going to be called, is truly based in Germany. Forget the Wander Vogel here come the Wunsch Vogel with their dreams that could come true. **One criticism that has been levelled at DIJ ad nauseam over the years is that the group has right wing extremist ideologies and agendas – yet your previous band Crisis was ironically labelled as being an extreme left wing group. While a crude response to this would be that if you did have a subversive agenda, you have actually done a fantastically poor job in clearly articulating it to ensnare and entrap masses of impressionable minds, however why have you and do you continue to use controversial themes and then steadfastly refused to discuss their implications? Likewise in all your ambiguity of content (lyrically and imagery) that could be interpreted on surface level as well as being impregnated with deeper meaning and/or metaphors, why do you think you continue to be a sort of lightning rod for controversy despite the various interpretations that can be made to various elements?** Probably because people are so non-specific about what they suppose are controversial images or themes or whatever! And, 9 times out of 10 they are so way off the mark that it would seem ridiculous for me to even try to attempt to bring them back into focus because they are obviously determined to see and hear things their own way. I know those types of people and I don't like their smug, know-it-all, 'concerned' thoughts and opinions. They belong to that tribe of Fish Wives that sneakily look out through their net curtains at what their neighbours are up to and tittle tattle about what they assume is 'going on' over the back garden fence, underneath the blankets and through the back of beyond and try to ruin other people's lives. I'd prefer that they ruin their own. And, surely left to their own devices, they will!

Do you think that modern dogma of 'political correctness' has lead to a ludicrous situation where the majority of people are blind to irony within the context of musical expression? Are artists (in the traditional sense) by some sort of social default given more leeway in regard to public interpretations of their work and are therefore more freely able to exploit irony and art? I don't feel that artists have any sort of monopoly on the use and understanding of irony and I also think that aspects of what is called 'political correctness' were absolutely necessary in helping to combat the more 'lumpen' aspects of sexism and racism. It's a shame that a lot more 'common sense' isn't also applied but, what do you expect from people. Given the choice between an easy, simplistic way of doing things and a difficult, stupid way of dealing with a matter most people will always choose the latter. That's humanity. The World isn't overflowing with problems because of some strange ethereal condition that has smitten it down. It's because of people! I'm dealing with 3 'people' right now that, given the choice, took the latter route because they wanted to fuck with me. They wanted to show me 'who was boss'. They wanted a problem and they wanted to screw me. It could have been so very different but, typically those bimbos cut off their nose to smite their own face. I would love to cut off a lot more!

In another interview (Dark Angel Issue 20# 1995) made reference to your meeting with 'God' or 'life force' in London in 1980. How much should we read into this as being a metaphor for spiritual awakening or could it perhaps have been the initial mental spark that lead to the formation of Death in June? It was a spiritual awakening, it was a meeting with God, it was being enveloped within a deluge of a Life Force, it was a meeting of Heaven and Hell on earth, it was Everything! And, I know it will always be Everything even though the passage of time cushions me from the more devastating smells and memories and feelings of that time. It was the foundation of Everything that has brought me to Here. It may not consciously have been the initial mental spark that gave birth to Death In June but, it definitely had a say in it from the very beginning and totally took over from the time when Patrick Leagas departed and I started to write "The World That Summer" album. It kept me strong and focussed and continues to, although I tend not to draw on its energy the way I used to. I took too much of it and that can




equally devour you. It did come close! To cast aside any ambivalence this statement might have it has nothing to do with the taking of any chemicals etc. It was 'something' that really did happen to me in London on a summer's afternoon, 1980. I still puzzle over it. I still Love it and I still Dread it. To think how pathetically unprepared I was is the stuff of Tears.

Destiny and fate are common themes that permeate the various interview of yours that I have read, how much do you feel this is directed by your own subconscious as opposed to an external force or entity? In all honesty, who can really tell? However, I can definitely say that I've seen so many signs in my Life I feel I am on a course that has been, to a certain degree, pre-ordained and that I don't believe are self delusory. But, also within that structure I feel you do have room for manoeuvre. That is the nature of Wyrd. Think of those weak, sly dullards that I was mentioning earlier. They did have a choice and history has already shown that they made the wrong one. History, Destiny, Fate or Angels will continue to demonstrate that, until they are no more and the cleansing process has been completed.

Given that I imagine that you will never father any children, do you hold any regret that you will not be leaving a legacy by the continuation of your bloodline? Could it also be construed that this situation is central to Death in June being the focal point of your life, thus the project could be viewed as a sort of surrogate child? This is possibly the most interesting question I've ever been asked. When I was 30 in 1986/87 I underwent a very paternal phase in my life and had very strong urges to father a child. Obviously, I didn't want a relationship with a woman so I answered some ads placed by couples and even met some. The best of the bunch was a pair who lived in Northampton in the Midlands of England. When I went to meet them I was greeted at the railway station by a distinguished looking man in his 50's and immediately whisked off in his Mercedes Benz to rendezvous with his wife. She turned out to be German and just a little older than me. We all got on very well but she and I really hit it off and raved about the work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Kraftwerk. It was decided that we should go for a meal and it was when we arrived at the restaurant that the whole thing started to take on different dimensions that unnerved me. The restaurant itself was a converted railway carriage that seemed to be situated in the middle of nowhere and during the walk to it I noticed the man had a club foot. We all still got on really well but for me it began to feel like I was sitting in the railway carriage where Hitler made France sign the capitulation papers in 1940 with Joseph Goebbels and Eva Braun. What kind of baby was I going to be part of creating? Kenneth Anger says that if you lead your life correctly it is filled with recurring themes but I wasn't sure if I really wanted to take this theme that far! We went back to their house where they wanted us all to go to bed together and see how things worked out but, I decided against that offer and told them I didn't think it was wise to take the matter any further. The journey back to the railway station was filled with the sound of the wife weeping in the back of the Mercedes and it was a hard journey for me back to London in the train. Anyway, shortly after I was told by a very down to earth white South African stripper girlfriend of mine that I should view my works as my children and I've sort of

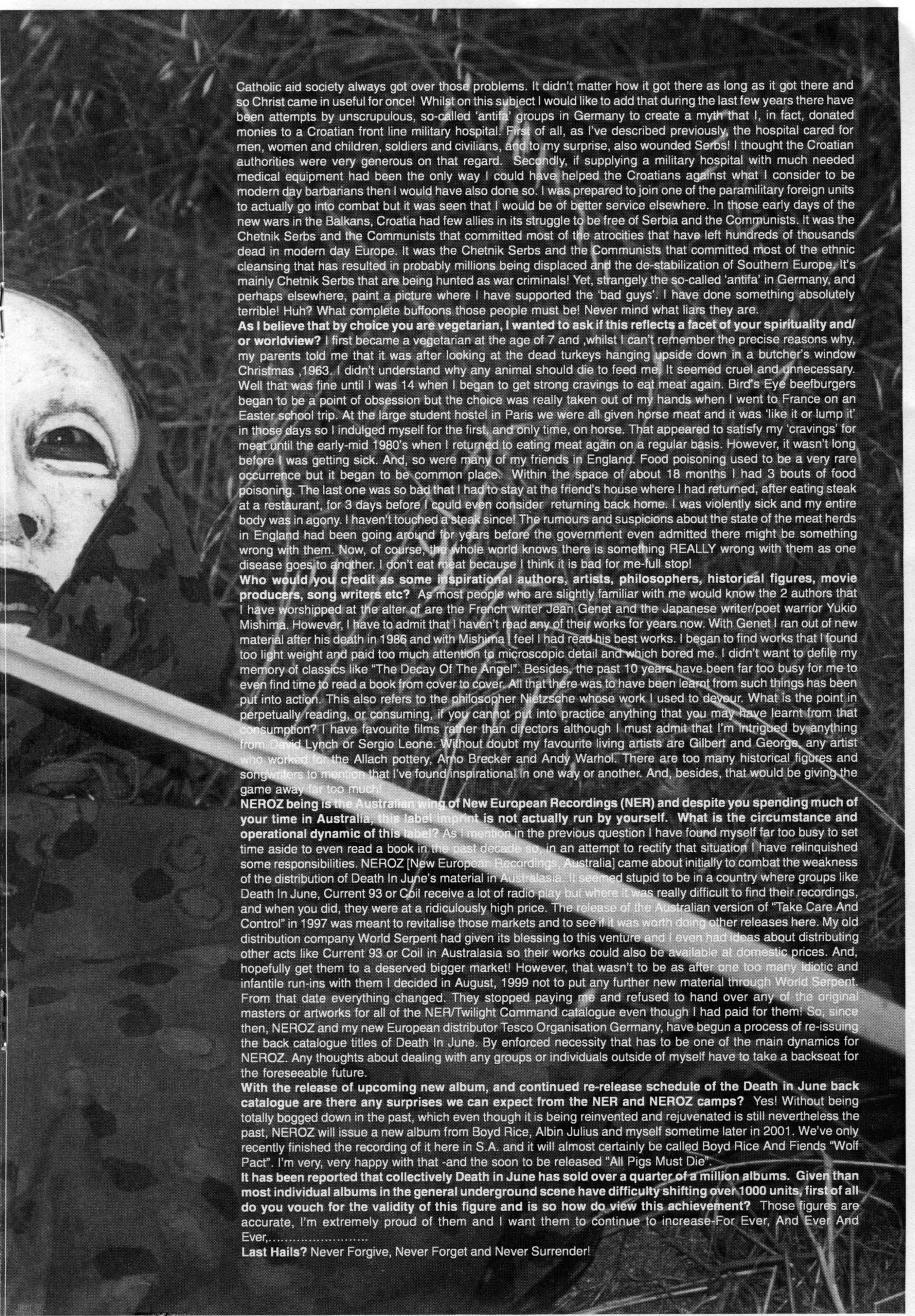




come
to terms
with that. Even
though I do think that could
be a bit simplistic and banal!
Regardless, I still think I should have gone to
bed with the couple if for no reason other than that I
could say that I fucked Eva and Joseph, although he looked
more like Anthony Hopkins – with a club foot!

Through the 'Something is Coming' DCD you showed your more than fleeting interest in the Balkans conflict. Likewise it seems that you actually contemplated enlisting to actually participate in the war. Can you expand on your obvious extreme depth of interest (or even empathy) for the people of this region of Europe? In many ways it is very simple. I was familiar with places like Sarajevo, Mostar and Zagreb for years before the war because, like many Western Europeans I had spent time there on holiday. What was then Yugoslavia was a very cheap place to visit for a Westerner and relatively open in comparison to other communist countries in Europe. However, despite the sun shining and the beaches being really beautiful there was always a very heavy military presence. That communist, paranoid way of viewing the outside world, or their own population, was always there. Control was a major concern for their government but 45 years after the Second World War that began to fall to bits. I wasn't really aware of the different nation states that made up Yugoslavia until I started receiving letters from that region which discussed their fears of what they thought would happen. From the mid-1980's we had been selling more and more records and cds into that region and had begun to communicate with more people there so when the war, and accompanying atrocities, started it didn't feel to me like a far off land filled with barbarians but, rather a place that was only 2 hours flight from London where people I knew lived. Inevitably, an offer to perform in the capital of Croatia came from a friend there and I immediately accepted the offer to go to Zagreb. Friends there told me how all the groups that had concerts planned in Croatia had cancelled since the war had started. 'Hard' groups like Public Enemy were now seen as cissies and there were a number of heavy metal acts that had suddenly shown their true colours so, into that void stepped the World Famous Homosexual, Nazi Group Death In June, the First British Group to Perform in Croatia during the War! Wow!! When we got there, of course, it wasn't so funny. What I had seen on the television news was as nothing to the reality of the situation. The Croats really had their backs against the wall in their struggle to be free. How they had held out against the armed might of the Yugoslav National Army [mainly Serbs] and their Serb nationalist militia allies [known as Chetniks] was hard to believe. Bosnia was about to get the same treatment but the first slaughters took place in Croatia and the whole city of Zagreb was filled with refugees and terribly mutilated wounded. Near to where we were staying was a hospital which we decided to visit. It's patients spilled out onto the streets around the apartment we were living in and in the quiet of the night you could hear them crying in agony. Unfortunately, inside the hospital it wasn't much better and the disgusting scenes of armless and legless men, women and children left an indelible impression on me. I felt I had to do something so the proceeds from the "Something Is Coming" double LP/Cd which I had recorded in Croatia went to buying equipment for the hospital. About \$US30,000 of it which directly went to the hospital and which directly benefited those people there. I visited Croatia a lot during the war and I made sure that did happen although there were a few weird attempts to interfere with the deliveries of equipment – mainly from Croatian Customs of all people! However, a few backhanders and the help of a





Catholic aid society always got over those problems. It didn't matter how it got there as long as it got there and so Christ came in useful for once! Whilst on this subject I would like to add that during the last few years there have been attempts by unscrupulous, so-called 'antifa' groups in Germany to create a myth that I, in fact, donated monies to a Croatian front line military hospital. First of all, as I've described previously, the hospital cared for men, women and children, soldiers and civilians, and to my surprise, also wounded Serbs! I thought the Croatian authorities were very generous on that regard. Secondly, if supplying a military hospital with much needed medical equipment had been the only way I could have helped the Croats against what I consider to be modern day barbarians then I would have also done so. I was prepared to join one of the paramilitary foreign units to actually go into combat but it was seen that I would be of better service elsewhere. In those early days of the new wars in the Balkans, Croatia had few allies in its struggle to be free of Serbia and the Communists. It was the Chetnik Serbs and the Communists that committed most of the atrocities that have left hundreds of thousands dead in modern day Europe. It was the Chetnik Serbs and the Communists that committed most of the ethnic cleansing that has resulted in probably millions being displaced and the de-stabilization of Southern Europe. It's mainly Chetnik Serbs that are being hunted as war criminals! Yet, strangely the so-called 'antifa' in Germany, and perhaps elsewhere, paint a picture where I have supported the 'bad guys'. I have done something absolutely terrible! Huh? What complete buffoons those people must be! Never mind what liars they are.

As I believe that by choice you are vegetarian, I wanted to ask if this reflects a facet of your spirituality and/or worldview? I first became a vegetarian at the age of 7 and, whilst I can't remember the precise reasons why, my parents told me that it was after looking at the dead turkeys hanging upside down in a butcher's window Christmas, 1963. I didn't understand why any animal should die to feed me. It seemed cruel and unnecessary. Well that was fine until I was 14 when I began to get strong cravings to eat meat again. Bird's Eye beefburgers began to be a point of obsession but the choice was really taken out of my hands when I went to France on an Easter school trip. At the large student hostel in Paris we were all given horse meat and it was 'like it or lump it' in those days so I indulged myself for the first, and only time, on horse. That appeared to satisfy my 'cravings' for meat until the early-mid 1980's when I returned to eating meat again on a regular basis. However, it wasn't long before I was getting sick. And, so were many of my friends in England. Food poisoning used to be a very rare occurrence but it began to be common place. Within the space of about 18 months I had 3 bouts of food poisoning. The last one was so bad that I had to stay at the friend's house where I had returned, after eating steak at a restaurant, for 3 days before I could even consider returning back home. I was violently sick and my entire body was in agony. I haven't touched a steak since! The rumours and suspicions about the state of the meat herds in England had been going around for years before the government even admitted there might be something wrong with them. Now, of course, the whole world knows there is something REALLY wrong with them as one disease goes to another. I don't eat meat because I think it is bad for me-full stop!

Who would you credit as some inspirational authors, artists, philosophers, historical figures, movie producers, song writers etc? As most people who are slightly familiar with me would know the 2 authors that I have worshipped at the altar of are the French writer Jean Genet and the Japanese writer/poet warrior Yukio Mishima. However, I have to admit that I haven't read any of their works for years now. With Genet I ran out of new material after his death in 1986 and with Mishima I feel I had read his best works. I began to find works that I found too light weight and paid too much attention to microscopic detail and which bored me. I didn't want to defile my memory of classics like "The Decay Of The Angel". Besides, the past 10 years have been far too busy for me to even find time to read a book from cover to cover. All that there was to have been learnt from such things has been put into action. This also refers to the philosopher Nietzsche whose work I used to devour. What is the point in perpetually reading, or consuming, if you cannot put into practice anything that you may have learnt from that consumption? I have favourite films rather than directors although I must admit that I'm intrigued by anything from David Lynch or Sergio Leone. Without doubt my favourite living artists are Gilbert and George, any artist who worked for the Allach pottery, Arno Brecker and Andy Warhol. There are too many historical figures and songwriters to mention that I've found inspirational in one way or another. And, besides, that would be giving the game away far too much!

NEROZ being is the Australian wing of New European Recordings (NER) and despite you spending much of your time in Australia, this label imprint is not actually run by yourself. What is the circumstance and operational dynamic of this label? As I mention in the previous question I have found myself far too busy to set time aside to even read a book in the past decade so, in an attempt to rectify that situation I have relinquished some responsibilities. NEROZ [New European Recordings, Australia] came about initially to combat the weakness of the distribution of Death In June's material in Australasia. It seemed stupid to be in a country where groups like Death In June, Current 93 or Coil receive a lot of radio play but where it was really difficult to find their recordings, and when you did, they were at a ridiculously high price. The release of the Australian version of "Take Care And Control" in 1997 was meant to revitalise those markets and to see if it was worth doing other releases here. My old distribution company World Serpent had given its blessing to this venture and I even had ideas about distributing other acts like Current 93 or Coil in Australasia so their works could also be available at domestic prices. And, hopefully get them to a deserved bigger market! However, that wasn't to be as after one too many idiotic and infantile run-ins with them I decided in August, 1999 not to put any further new material through World Serpent. From that date everything changed. They stopped paying me and refused to hand over any of the original masters or artworks for all of the NER/Twilight Command catalogue even though I had paid for them! So, since then, NEROZ and my new European distributor Tesco Organisation Germany, have begun a process of re-issuing the back catalogue titles of Death In June. By enforced necessity that has to be one of the main dynamics for NEROZ. Any thoughts about dealing with any groups or individuals outside of myself have to take a backseat for the foreseeable future.

With the release of upcoming new album, and continued re-release schedule of the Death In June back catalogue are there any surprises we can expect from the NER and NEROZ camps? Yes! Without being totally bogged down in the past, which even though it is being reinvented and rejuvenated is still nevertheless the past, NEROZ will issue a new album from Boyd Rice, Albin Julius and myself sometime later in 2001. We've only recently finished the recording of it here in S.A. and it will almost certainly be called Boyd Rice And Fiends "Wolf Pact". I'm very, very happy with that -and the soon to be released "All Pigs Must Die".

It has been reported that collectively Death In June has sold over a quarter of a million albums. Given that most individual albums in the general underground scene have difficulty shifting over 1000 units, first of all do you vouch for the validity of this figure and is so how do you view this achievement? Those figures are accurate, I'm extremely proud of them and I want them to continue to increase-For Ever, For Ever And Ever.....

Last Hails? Never Forgive, Never Forget and Never Surrender!

BRIGHTER DEATH NOW

The reputation of Roger Karmanik aka Brighter Death Now surely precedes him due to the sheer number of year he has been a player in the industrial scene, either by virtue of his recording project/s or as the label boss of the Cold Meat Industry empire. Anyway Roger was obliging enough to answer my questions (but not without a bit of prodding first!) with the results published for your pleasure below.

Given that Brighter Death Now has formally existed as a project for some 13 years, has the project become an ingrained part of your personality? Do you consider 'Roger Karmanik' and 'Brighter Death Now' to now be mutually exclusive, or is it that Brighter Death Now has taken on such a life of its own that it can be considered separate and removed from you? It is me, alright. Lets say, the project was born out of some of my personalities, now all merged into a stronger and more perceptive ME!

Can you ever envisage a time where Brighter Death Now will no longer be musically active and subsequently be laid to rest? I thought that I never could, but now I can, in what time prospect we are talking about I can not say, but there will of course be a time when I move my creative side to another object. Lately I have found writing poems of some interest, but it could even end up as common as basic gardening.

Can you give a summation of your perceptions to how Brighter Death Now has grown and evolved over its life span thus far? It started as a little child, played around, got scared, frightened and depressed, moved on and became a creature that scares, frightens and spreads depression as leprosy, got cured, raised up an proclamation of world peace, love, understanding and death to those who don't understand.

In the period of 16-17 years that you have been producing harsh electronics (from Lille Roger to Brighter Death Now) you have become both a father and husband. Have these circumstances changed or altered your outlook on life in general and the modus operandi behind your music production? Yes it has, I have matured in a way, become a better man, more content, but not more common as the average family husbands (I assume). I use my insight in a slightly different perspective, I see upon life rather different as well as upon the work I do in comparing to what many other in this scene does I assume. Talking of your family, your wife is obviously well aware of all aspects of your music, however how do you children perceive your musical leanings – or is it to the extent that you shield them from it until they are older and can better understand? Well considering some people never get old enough to understand, I would just let it grow into them, like any other family someday it will get to their knowledge, and what will happened from there I can not say, but I will not shield them from more than they're capable to handle. My oldest daughter, who is 13, is a huge fan of Eminem.

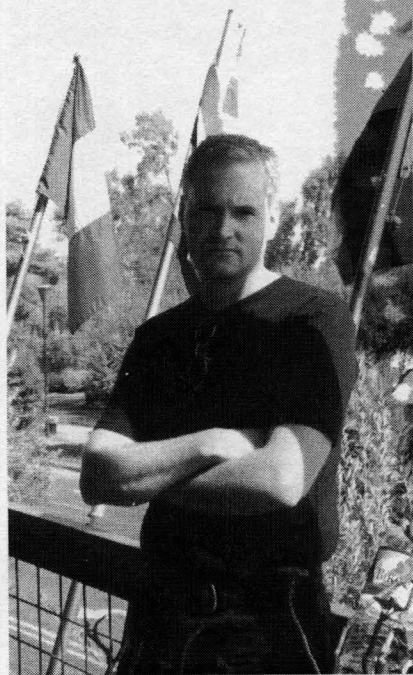
There are aspects of exploration on each of your albums, yet on the past three albums ('Obsessis', 'May All Be Dead' and 'Innerwar') there appears to be more harsher motivations that have drawn comparisons to the power electronics scene and likewise that you are infusing anarchistic punk elements into Brighter Death Now's death industrial musings. How do you respond to such theories? Well it is very simple; I do what I feel like. Without looking back or forward, I just do it all straight out, as it comes from my heart. With all the respect from my history and all the influences of everything around me, it becomes a gigantic pot of images/influences/memories. The outcome is disastrous and inevitable.

In the beginning of your label Cold Meat Industry, there were few if any other groups on the label's roster that were in similar leagues to Brighter Death Now. However with CMI's recent re-establishing focus towards power electronic projects viewed along with the harsher direction of your recordings, the label's sound and Brighter Death Now's sound are more closely aligning. Was this deliberate or coincidental? Everything I do is deliberate, but at the present time I choose to see it as coincidental. With this I mean that many things in the past that I've previously seen as purely coincidental, seems more and more as a deliberately and subconsciously planned.

While most people clearly appreciate you current focus of Brighter Death Now, others seems to want you to further pursue the sounds explored on the 'Great Death' Trilogy and 'Necrose Evangelicum' CD's. Is this a likely prospect? No, not really, more likely is the Pain in progress era, something I like to catch up on again.

If one is to not take you material on face value (be it imagery/ titles/lyrics/ dialogue/ samples etc) and not jump to conclusions on such a basis, irony of content begins to filter through. However, on the latest album 'Obsessis' the irony has manifest itself in a humorous guise, particularly referencing the cover image and track titles. How do you view the themes of irony and humour in relation to Brighter Death Now? I think they have a great importance, like in life, life is an irony in itself, so instead of just laying crying in our beds, we can start laughing back in its face and make something creative out of it. People who can't look at themselves or their work with a part of irony is too pathetic in my eyes. Irony or a distance is the best cure for all this madness, a way to survive.

I have noted that through use images/ text/ samples/ lyrics of Brighter Death Now they paint a very bleak and sadistic picture, however when breaking these down into individual elements, it is more from the association of the material that leads to this perception and thus has ultimately been lead by the individuals interpretation. Do you view yourself as the collator of potentially questionable material under the Brighter Death Now banner to allow people to use, interpret and decipher it as they see fit, rather than you using such material to make a specific point – either for or against? I want people to make their mind up, or not, or just leave it open. I don't see things in either black or white, there is always a second meaning with almost everything, if you just want to find it. I am not trying to point in any political, ethical or morally direction, it is much up to each individual to decide right from wrong in all respect to others, individuals and alike. What is your opinion of the use of potentially offensive material for mere shock tactics within the industrial scene? When (if at all) will shock tactics in industrial music become redundant or at least a cliché – which many argue it already has? Shock tactics doesn't work anymore, there is no longer any offensive material, for that purpose, not since



we got the internet... nothing is sacred anymore! It is time that people start act differently.

What is inherent within the symbolism of the Brighter Death Now 'necrose' logo particularly as this has been a focal point of image on most albums to date? I use to say that the symbol stands for nothing, or everything, or anything that you may like, for me it stands for me and BDN, it is significant with what I believe in as I use it as a trademark for my music, the interpretation has grown into the symbol, rather than the opposite which seems to be more common nowadays with the use of symbols.

Over the past 5 years you have made various statements that Brighter Death Now will no longer to conduct interviews or play live, however these assertions have since been broken on a few occasions. Can this be construed as part of your erratic nature when referenced to the changing focus of Brighter Death Now over various albums? Will you continue to play live? Ha ha, yes it can! I like to hold up for a while, to gather strength, to withhold the unique attitude towards my work. I do actually like playing live, when it's over. But all the weeks, months, before it is just plain agony, I want each show to mean something and to be interesting, not just a damn playback of a dat-tape, that is so boring and I've seen so many boring concerts, you can't imaging. Sometimes I think I set my standards to high for myself, but at the same time I know, there is no other way to do it.

Talking of live performances while it was not so much of an assault, I hear at one show you grabbed the hair/head of one audience member at the front of the stage whilst delivering the main vocal line to "I Hate You" directly to this individual's face. What do you consider is the relationship between project member and audience when dealing with often quite hateful material? Also when performing live do you take on an alternate identity/ character in the presentation of the themes of the lyrics ie. being similar to what like what Mike Dando does with Con(trol)-Dom(ination)? I used to see BDN and myself as more of a "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" relation but I think we have melted very well together... When I record in my studio I am always alone, and many things are rushing through the head, whilst live it's like I am in the studio but suddenly there are people watching, it's like having people watching your most intimate moments, if some people gets to close in the wrong moment anything can happen, I am surprised worse things haven't happened, but it isn't until the latest shows that I felt more in a relaxed situation than I previously did on live performances, it's like I almost enjoyed it...

It seems that Lina of Deutsch Nepal has been involved in recent live performances as well as contributing to one of the tracks off the latest 'Obsessis' CD. Is his participation simply as a session member or something more? Well he is a good friend, and a great attraction to have on stage....! With him I can attract both the male and the female audience!

Concepts have been utilised throughout your various albums with the most notable being the 'Great Death' Trilogy. How important do you consider concepts are to the production of a focused album? For me it is 90%. The concept comes almost always first. But the Great Death trilogy was more a coincidental than a planned concept. When I did the LP I never thought about even doing a part 2 of it, but time went on and while I was working on some material it all made sense to make at least a double for the re-issue of the first, and then the idea was born for a trilogy. The Nordvinterdöd single was more like a bonus.... a way to see how far you could go with this lunacy.

Some time back you released a limited 10" on what appears to be a one off obscure CMI side label 'Anarchy and Violence'. One of the trademarks of this release was that you intentionally scuffed and marked the covers. In response I hear that you actually had complaints from customers that their copies were damaged. What is your view of vinyl buying collectors after this incident, and did this in any way lead to the lottery type game you played with the May All Be Dead DxLP? (the release saw the inclusion of various random bonus tracks and bonus single and double sided 7"s). Well the first reason for damaging these covers was the firstly the amount of special edition vinyls that more and more bands and labels released to rip off their poor fans of more money, and on the other hand the fans that really want that perfect vinyl, with that special number, and specially signed, with a specially handmade crocodile, or what ever the hell. So the whole thing was to give my fans, the BDN-freaks, something special, a nice low-priced limited edition vinyl with hand-damaged cover by my dear self, and not to my surprise they only complained!!! "ehh, this one is all damaged, do you have another one?" I never sign records either. Signing is for popstars and little girls. Yes it could have lead to the lottery of MABD, it at least planted an evil seed in my mind.

In that you have raised the Cold Meat Industry label to well respected and recognised prominence, whilst at the same time raising the profile of Brighter Death Now, from this stance would you view yourself as a sort of Godfather to the industrial scene? In the sense of giving offers that no-one can refuse? Maybe. But I don't really like to see myself as anything special. I am no more than anyone else, I might even see myself as less, and that may be my strength. I don't like to announce myself as a Godfather at least, not as the industrial music looks today.

I believe that you have a upcoming 12" on an American label Jinx. Firstly the majority of your work has been released on CMI, thus I wanted to ask what is your preference for Brighter Death Now - to self release albums to have total control over packaging, or to have another label take on the time and expense of preparing the release? As for this upcoming 12", from what era of recording to the tracks originate from? This 12" is cancelled out of various reasons, nothing to do with the label or the person behind that, as I have full respect for; JINX. I have just become more reserved to work with other people again. I use to feel that it was a good way to explore new grounds, theories, and concepts in a less hyped way, but at the moment I feel much too protective to my work to leave it in other peoples hands. It's paranoia.

What are the future recording plans for Brighter Death Now? Do you currently have any idea of style/ concepts/ direction? I have a great deal of plans....

The slaughterhouse floor is yours....last remarks? Chop!

IRM

purveyors of post-modern c r u c i f i x i o n

Despite being a relatively new player in the power electronics game, with their rather unique take on content and inspiration, it is not hard to envisage that IRM will quickly become a classic stalwart within the genre. With two albums already dropped on Cold Meat Industry (one LP and one CD), and a number of other releases in the pipeline, IRM were a perfect candidate for the pages of Spectrum 5#.

Starting at the beginning (or at least when you first surfaced), the Esthetiks of Cruelty compilation was the vehicle to brought your name to the wider public. What is your view of this compilation overall? Also do you feel that it was difficult to stand out amongst such a large and diverse group of mostly unknowns? I thought EOC was pretty good. My favourite acts are Nod, Klan and Blod. But to be honest I though our own material was among the strongest on the album. It stands out, don't it? Otherwise I'm not to keen on compilation albums, I don't buy these kind of records myself.

Taking things back to even prior to the above mentioned compilation, it would seem that IRM started as a project in 1997. Who would you acknowledge as influences that inspired you to embark on the creation of power electronic movements? Also how long had you been involved in the underground at the point when IRM was form? Acts like Brighter Death Now and Whitehouse had made a great impression on us. I still remember when I heard BDN for the first time; so monotonous, dark, suggestive and powerful. I had a similar experience with Whitehouse. These two acts changed my life and overall view on music. Me and my companion Erik had been into the industrial movement for a couple of years before IRM was founded. At that time we were really fed up with the occidental, and conventional, view of what music is and should be.

IRM consist of two members - what is the role that each plays in the group? It has also been said that IRM stated with a synthesiser as the only 'musical' tool. What equipment are you currently utilising? (I ask that none of your sounds remotely resemble what you would generally associate with being derived from a synthesiser). The two core members of IRM is me, Martin Bladh, and Erik Jarl. On all our previous recordings I guess our work has been rather separated; me writing the lyrics, creating the artwork, aesthetics etc, and Erik being our musical motor. But recently we've both been very active in the "musical" creation. It's true that we started out with a synthesiser as the only deriving sound source (I think it was some shitty half digital Yamaha), and that the heart of IRM still is the synthesisers. We use a Korg MS 10 / 20 with a SQ-10 sequencer. All the sounds on the Oedipus Dethroned album were derived from these. I also have to point out that Erik is a remarkable noise-maestro, really talented. On our latest recording Four Studies For a Crucifixion (released later this year on LSD.O), we've been trying to develop a more organic sound. Now we use acoustic instruments such as chimes, trombones, gong-gongs and accordions as well, so I guess the next IRM fulllength release will be quite different from it's precursors.

Ever since the release of the LP there has been a significant buzz about IRM. Are you surprised with this quickly gained notoriety? Well, we haven't really noticed this "buzz". Probably because we haven't had an email address until just recently. CMI may be a rather big label, but there aren't that many magazines and record stores that get the vinyl releases (especially if they're limited to 700 copies, like our first album). Although, I'm glad I haven't seen any bad reviews yet.

How would you view IRM as being one of the new wave of groups that are marking a new direction and focus for CMI? It's true that the Karmanik-family has expanded a bit; harsher acts like IRM, Institut, Projekt Hat, Iron Justices, Slogun and Sutcliffe Jugend is rather common these days. And I like this new wave of power industrial. It seems like we've become one of the spearheads of this "new wave". Nowadays Roger can afford to sign acts that he really likes himself, he's more into power industrial music than ambient/

darkwave and apocalyptic-folk hybrids.

Talking more broadly, does the IRM moniker stand for anything in particular and likewise does it, or could it operate in a similar fashion to the interchangeable meanings of the infamous SPK? First of all, IRM is a word, not a shortening. This word is really personal to me and Erik, it has pursued us for several years, and we don't even know it's rightful meaning our context yet. It seems irrelevant to try to explain it at this date. Although, I promise you that we'll find it out sooner or later; only time can tell when or where this will happen, but I can assure you that when the moment arises it will be a moment of understanding and supreme beauty. Then I can't exclude that our name might work as an interchangeable shortening in the old SPK tradition, maybe it is, maybe it isn't.

The route you have taken with your lyrical approach (a more philosophical slant) seems quite a diversion from the standard political/ true crime/ serial killer focus of many power electronics groups. From both listening to and reading your lyrics, permeating themes include that of a martyr figure, personal sacrifice, crucifixion, clinical dissection etc, thus appropriating the convergence of aspects spirituality, obsessiveness, dogma etc. Would you agree with this assessment and how would you personally categorise IRM's focus and lyrical approach? It's not just that I'm sick of the usual "sub-cultural" power electronic concept, it's more a thing of me finding these kind of shock tactics unnecessary, cause in reality they are not shocking anymore (TG did it in the mid seventies, yawn...). Power electronics / power industrial or whatever, have developed into some kind of serious sub-cultural movement. You know "independent individuals" that listens to the same music, wearing the same clothes and having the same opinions as the other "independent individuals". Everything seems to be focused around selling a product; this is totally non aesthetic and all through awful. IRM is an aesthetic, not an idealistic creation. I have my personal obsessions which I've repeated over and over again on our albums. Everything is about haunting images. I try to get my subconscious down on paper. This make our work very personal and introvert. Did you know that I've been obsessed by pictures of the crucifixion? Yeah, I guess you figured that out. I like to use an imaginary martyr figure to help me out in my writing, some kind of masochist test pilot. This Christ figure have to make an odyssey through my subconscious netherworld, and it always comes out as a journey through flesh and blood, like being crucified to a dissecting table. People use to ask me if this test pilot is me, and the answer is yes, sometimes it is me, but I'm also a voyeur observing this imaginary spectacle. Looking back at the OD album, it seems like all the lyrics are dealing with some kind of post-modern crucifixion, and that makes it a concept album. I'm still obsessed by images of the "post-modern crucifixion", so I guess it will be the main subject on the next IRM album as well.

Considering that the images of your two official releases detail a bandaged head, broken teeth, dismembered flesh and surgical scissors it delivers the feeling that you also have a sort of medical/ clinical type fixation (& not to mention various track titles and lyrics that point to this concussion). Would you agree? Yes, there is a medical fetishism within those images and writing. The scissors is especially common. Mainly because it's a fascinating tool. When I was a child I saw the Cronenberg film "Dead Zone", in which a man commits suicide by forcing a pair of scissors into his mouth. That scene really stuck with me for years. The scissor is a useful tool but could still be a lethal weapon which has the power to cut objects into half. It's also used for surgical means, and at this occasion it is an aiding tool and a threatening weapon towards our bodies, all at the same time. I don't know why I have this fascination for medical/surgical aesthetics. Maybe because they're the absolute everyday fear of most occidentals these days. Death is always related to hospitals, surgeons and doctors. Surgical aid is also the closest to physical torture most of us get. To be afraid of this subject is the same as fear of death, still it's so common to us. Also, I can't deny being influenced by the Vienna actionist Rudolf Schwarzkogler (the insert photograph of the bandaged head on our first album was taken by him). His work is an endless source of inspiration for me; the pictures are incredible beautiful. I remember buying his collected work some years ago and being completely stunned by its beauty. The way he let medical equipment such as syringes, bandage and scissors become tools of annihilation invokes some kind of mystic martyrdom, just amazing. Sometimes I only have to look at his work and the words and images comes flowing through my head. The IRM imaginary is often more fleshy though, not as sterile and clean as Schwarzkoglers.

In that there are further themes of personal mutilation, is this something that you personally partake in or does IRM give the a sort of metaphorical catharsis to not warrant such actions? Self mutilation is also one of my obsessions. As I mentioned before IRM is about images, to put yourself into different kinds of situations on an imaginary plain. I think it's hard to determine if you should view this as being active or not. To me it's aesthetic fantasies. Somebody may think I am a spineless chicken-shit hiding away in my imaginary world, but this is what its all about. I'm not for or against self mutilation, just very interested. I especially enjoy reading doctors reports and watch pictures of mutilated genitals because it feels so symbolic. It's like the ultimate sexual cleansing. Then there is psychical mutilation; how to cut yourself out and what I have to do in order to accomplish that.

Given your diversion in lyrical approach, what is your view of the role that politics plays in much of the content of power electronics inspiration? Do you feel that this is simply a trait of the style and is then simply perpetrated by various groups? What is your opinion of the face value

extreme right/ extreme left ideology that is so often presented in this scene? People tend to see everything in black or white, right or left etc. Frankly, I don't care. If that's what they want let them have it. I think they're just choosing an easy way of life and how to live it out. But that's just my opinion, if it works with them, then fine. We have no interest in politics whatsoever, IRM is an esthetical creation built around personal fantasies and has no revolutionary tendencies.

While still a raucously wild ride, Oedipus Dethroned is a more subtle affair than the debut 'red' (or self titled) album. What were you trying to achieve with the direction and sound of each of these releases? The Red Album is more or less a rock album with choruses etc. It's got seven rather catchy tracks that are very easy to enjoy. When we did OD we wanted to do something different, more epic. The sounds are more sublime and the lyrics don't follow any ordinary narrative context. Most of the lyrics were done when we started to record, and we both knew what we wanted: a concept album. It took about five months to record it and we're satisfied with the outcome.

Talking of Oedipus Dethroned, the lyrics pertaining to the track of the same title does not seem to match up with what one would refer to a the Oedipus myth or Oedipus complex (apart from a barely discernible sound bite that reference child and mother). Can you expand on this perception? The mythical protagonist from the Sophocles tragedy "Oedipus Rex" is a stark symbol for physical and psychical cleansing. Just like Christ he's a martyr figure; his fascinating life- tragedy, the mother/ father relation and the self mutilation: his blinding. He's one of the ultimate symbolic protagonists for an album such as OD. The whole catharsis theory personified. The album is a study of the post-modern crucifixion and the post-modern tragedy as well. The title track had been with me long before the album was recorded, it was the working-title for our second fulllength-album almost a year before we recorded it. When we put all the material together it seemed like the second track embodied all the essential essence/ context of the album, that's why I choose the symbolic name OD for it. Somebody thought that the title was some kind of anti-Freud statement, but that is wrong.

Likewise the list of track titles on Oedipus Dethroned seems to indicate a concept, yet the disjointed ideas and phrases of the lyrics tend to disguise any overall concept that might be present. Thoughts? OD is a concept album, and by now you already know it's context.

What authors or philosophers interest you if not inspire the works of IRM? Artists such as Hermann Nitsch, Rudolf Schwarzkogler and Francis Bacon. I enjoy the work of authors such as de Sade, Jean Genet, Peter Sotos, Burroughs etc. I've felt inspired by David Cronenbergs thoughts of the "new flesh" and Antonin Artauds theories about a new human anatomy and "the theatre of cruelty". I also like to read surgical manuals and lexicons. Lately I felt attracted to the pictures of Joel-Peter Witkin and the films of Alejandro Jodorowsky.

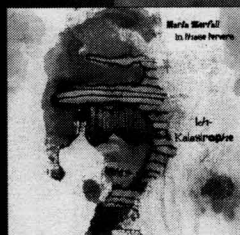
Both the external covers of the debut LP and follow up CD are both housed in very simplistic packaging (plan red with black writing for the LP and black with red writing for the CD). Was this style something specifically requested by the group? In that you have stated that the red cover represented anger, what can we construe from the use of a black cover? We like to have a strictly functional artwork to our releases, and I have designed them by myself. The red colour on our first album doesn't necessarily have to represent anger; the colour red is very powerful and suggestive, like the inside of a body, or maybe a murder, it's the colour of intense life and action. Black has got a similar impact, I don't really know how to describe it. The OD album feature both colours, not just black. It's red surrounded by black. What do you make out of it? (ED: well, the black cover could be considered to represent depression and/ or self loathing which draws parallels to the more drawn out and intense atmospheres of OD as opposed to the straight forward & aggressive style of the Red Album).

Your personal image hasn't played any sort of role in IRM thus far. Is this by deliberate choice or unplanned consequence? Its been a deliberate choice from our side. Pictures of ourselves would probably destroy the impact of the overall artwork.

I hear that upcoming releases include a double 7" on the new American label LSD Organization and a compilation appearance on Malignant Records. Can you give details of these items and likewise any other material and or projects that you might be working on? LSD.O is going to release a 2 x 7" inch boxset called "Four Studies For A Crucifixion" limited to 500 hundred copies, sometime this spring. As you mentioned we'll participate on a compilation album for Malignant Records. I don't know when this item will be released. We're going to record an 2 x CD for CMI later this year (we haven't got any working title yet). There has also been some plans to release a 7" on the Swedish label Segerhuva. Then there is some other upcoming projects: there will be some intense IRM live-actions for a limited audience. In these actions the audience will be one of the active forces of the performance. We're also going to do a short, rather controversial film, which will be sold through CMI (maybe together with the next IRM album).

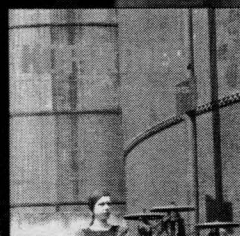
Martin, thanks for you input.....

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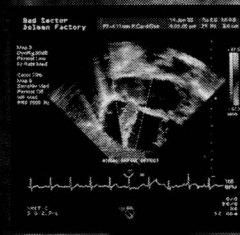
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6000-51 Dark Water Memories "Night fog kommando" (MLP)
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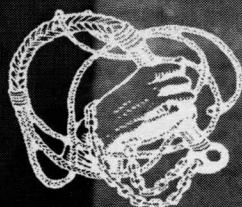
6000-53 Intensive Care Unit "ICU" (7")
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6000-55 Grey Wolves "Pure hatred" (LP)
 *incl. the best tracks from tapes like "religion" etc. the original cultural terrorists!!!

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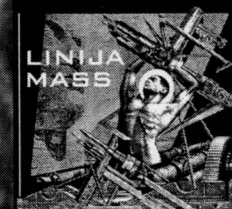
Linija Mass "Proletkult"
 6000-50, LP

*first vinyl album of this unbelievable russian project, martial old school industrial with steel percussion & cold atmosphere



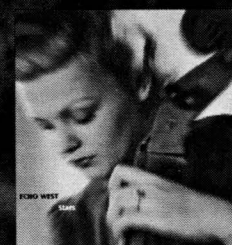
Linija Mass "Eiserne Revolution"
 6000-52, 7"

*2nd 7" on MDP, martial heroic industrial sounds about the iron revolution



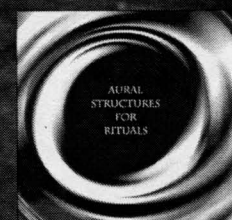
Echo West "Stars"
 6000-54, 7"

*aesthetic coldpop & minimal electronics, the most poppy release on MDP ever!!!



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spectre

[...it's a fetish thing...]

With a penchant for quality music, Spectre has forged quite a niche for themselves via producing some rather fine releases - thus far being purely on vinyl & some with quite special and elaborate packaging. Label operator Tom Kloeck speaks his mind....

Spectre, being born out of the demise of a publication 'Audio View' (that spanned two issues), can you give an overview of your collective involvement in the underground music scene that lead up to the formation of 'Audio View' and then on to starting the record label? About 15-16 years ago I was tired of listening to the boring commercial music on the radio and got interested in more electronic orientated music like house, techno and stuff like that. After a while I discovered the more "softer" side of these genres, more ambient-like music. I then founded my weekly radio show on a local radio station - that was back in 1991. I discovered new music every week and I wanted to "do" something creative with all those new experiences and started the magazine Audioview. Since I was doing most of the work by myself I only published 2 issues. After that, I decided to start Spectre, initially only for producing the 10" series. Later on, I decided that other releases and platforms should be possible and I created the two sub labels.

Taking a glance of Spectre, it is not a label that has had a high number of releases and in fact only 1 product was released per year from 1996 through to 2000. To some this might seem that Spectre is a small scale hobby label, however how would you personally assess the labels status and its individual importance to you? Well, I consider the releases on both sub labels Nocturnus and Nautilus also as genuine Spectre releases. But indeed, the number of releases is not very high. But that's ok for me, I have a full-time day job and cannot spent all my time to the label. Also, my goal is not to releases as much music as possible, but only the music and bands I like. Quality before quantity! The label is rather important to me, but I allow myself to have spare time to do other things that I like, for example collecting music from various other labels and running the weekly radio show.

To someone uninitiated to the outputs of Spectre, how would you describe the focus, style and direction of the releases on the label? for Spectre itself I can say that the general direction is somewhere situated between electronic/experimental/industrial music. I like the dark moods of musical styles, so most music released on spectre should carry that vibe. For other moods, I created the 2 sub labels. Nocturnus is more rhythm-orientated while Nautilus focuses on water-related ambient projects. I think Nautilus is a great project, I always wanted to create something around water and this is the perfect vehicle - The Kraken album, the Ah Cama-Sotz U-Boot album and the new Bad Sector collaboration are in my opinion really great albums.

Certainly flying in the face of what I would expect to constitute commercial viability, you have embarked on producing a 10 x 10" series with each item in the series limited to 90 special packaged copies (a further 10 of those in extra special packaging). Can you please give a bit of an overview to this concept series and what it has encompassed with the thus far released items and where you expect to take it with future items in the series? Ah... it's certainly not a commercial series, on the contrary! However all releases in this series are rather quickly sold, the profits are none... The concept of the series is to produce records with an extreme limitation and extraordinary packaging - I myself am a collector of limited editions and special packages, so I hope this series is somewhat of a wet dream for other collectors. Beside the special layout, the music is an important element of the concept - it has to be special too. Two good examples of this are the Aube releases (with sounds of human blood vessels) and the SGS release (with re-sampled classical sounds). There are no exact plans for the future of this series - it definitely ends with the 10th 10" release but no deals are made at this time.

Overall how do you feel that Spectre has been received in the underground scene and are you content with the stature that you currently have? to my surprise very well ! People are very keen on the limited editions and praise Spectre for the care of music and layout. For me it's natural, if you do something, do it right or not at all! It's good to get such enthusiast reactions - it encourages even more to go on.

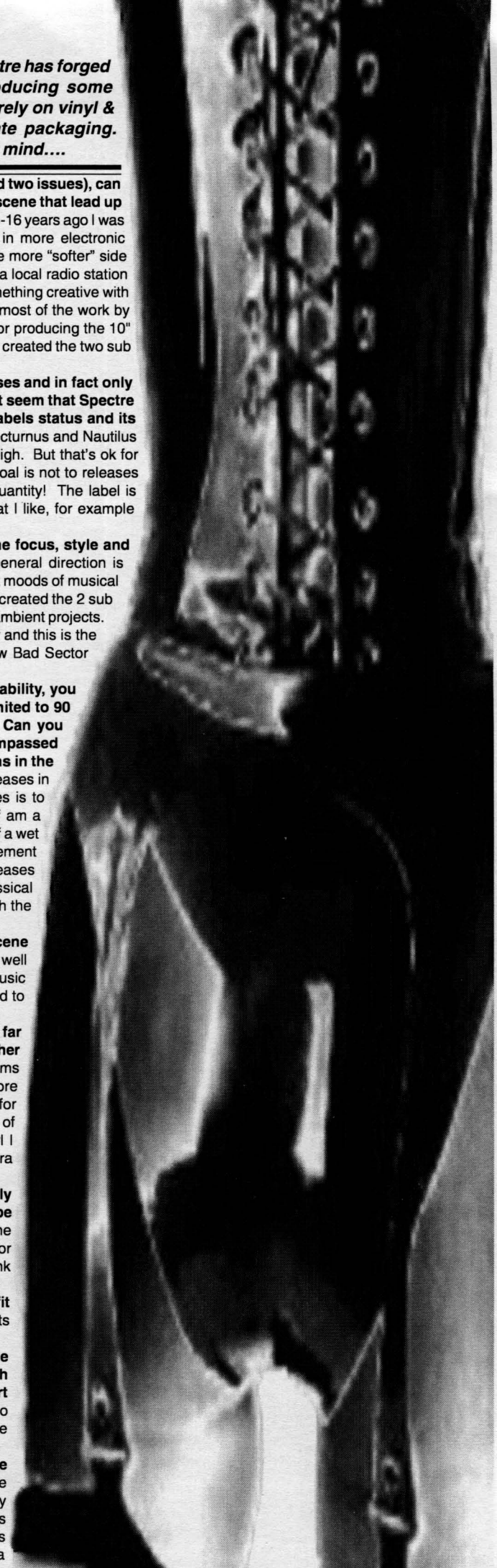
When referencing one of Spectre's slogan's "It's a fetish thing" you have thus far held true to this in only releasing vinyl record products. Can you expand a bit further on your personal interest in the vinyl format? Right now I'm working on 2 CD albums - but Spectre and vinyl will always be partners! Vinyl is a great product and is more "human" than the perfect and faultless cd format - vinyl has that typical sound and for fetishists it stays the perfect medium for music. However, CD has its advantage too of course - clear sounds, no errors, better quality and cheaper to produce. The vinyl I produce is often very expensive; extra heavy quality sometimes combined with extra colors... but that only adds to the fetish-value and that's good!

Do you envisage branching out into other audio formats such as CD's to potentially gain a greater exposure to receptive fans of this style of music but who may not be fanatical vinyl collectors? As I said I'm going to produce CD's too, but not for the reason you mention. If people don't want to buy vinyl, well that's ok and back luck for them but that's not my problem. I like to stick to vinyl for certain releases - I don't think I will ever do a re-release on CD or do a CD/vinyl release...

Another slogan you use is "Aggression is good for you"? How does this ideal fit within the framework of Spectre's operations? But that's irony you know... so it fits perfectly...

After a number of releases on Spectre you have branched out with two new side labels - Nocturnus and Nautilus. What was it that you felt you could not accomplish under the one Spectre label banner that ultimately lead to the decision to start these two other sub labels? I think that's a fetish thing again... series are fun to do and to collect too. but as for the Nautilus concept it's obvious that it has to be separate from the regular Spectre releases - it's something completely different.

What has been your favourite release thus far and alternately what has been the most difficult to produce? Favourite is tough to decide... every new release feels like the best one so I don't think I can pick one out... the best achieved one was certainly The Book ov Shadowz. The most difficult one to produce was the new Stone Glass Steel 10"... I had to combine the 3 elements into one good looking concept that was possible to produce... and also everything that could go wrong with producing such a



release went wrong and caused huge delays. At that time I was also moving to another house which caused even more stress...

I will say that Spectre items (including sub labels) have a certain 'look' to the style of the computer manipulated designs of the covers. I assume all artwork for the releases is produced by yourself? No - I wish... Sandy from Hybrids (recydesign) is doing most of the layout for the Spectre releases and I think he does a great job - mostly I give him some general ideas about how the cover or layout should look like and after a process of going back and forth with ideas we finally get a good result I think.

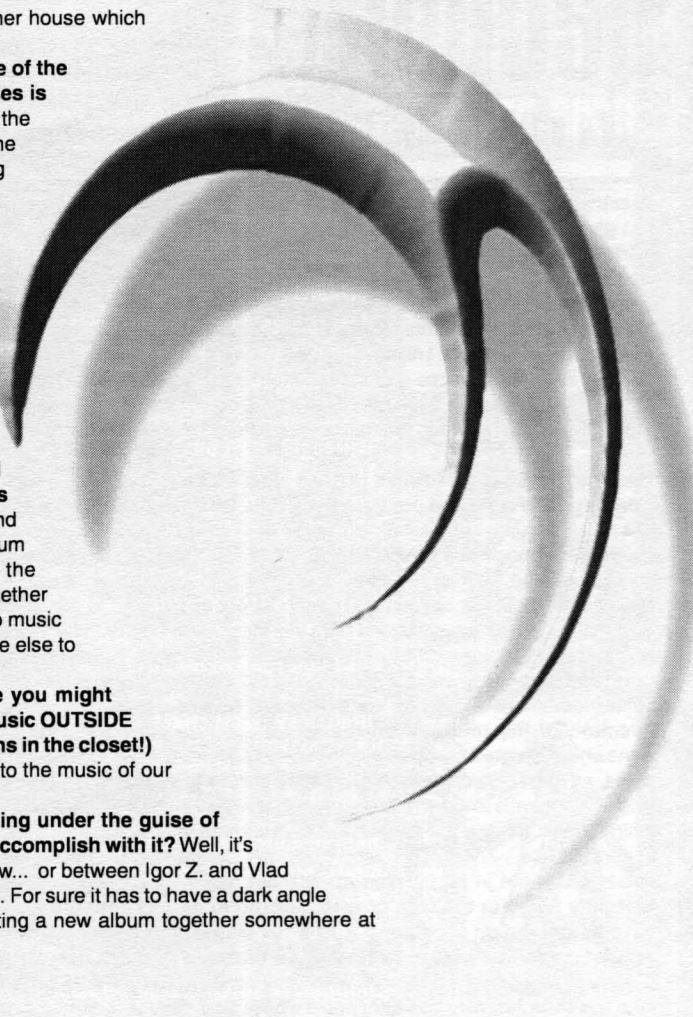
On a number of internet mailing forums you use a self-styled title of Dr Demon which appears to be a very tongue in cheek play on the pseudo evil attitudes of selected factions of the underground scene. What role (if any) do you think humour play in the underground music scene given the proliferation of projects with serious attitudes bordering on the ultra obsessive? For me humour is a way of life and I think it's important to reevaluate things - sometimes people are so dead serious about themselves and what they do that it's becoming ridiculous... you know, aggression IS good for you ;-)

Now I don't mind if you be bluntly honest with this one - what was your initial reaction to find out about a new magazine publication with an almost identical name, likewise operating in the same scene?! (and dear reader for the record I did not even know of the existence of Spectre until AFTER Issue 1# of Spectrum was released). hehe - I think it was the same big surprise for me as for you - but I don't mind it you know - I'm very glad that our names are related to same minded people - spectrum is one of the few quality magazines around with a clear and focused interest on the industrial scene - I think it's a pity that a lot of magazines want to bring to many styles together - for me that is not interesting - friends of mine tell me that I'm a purist when it comes to music but that's OK with me - I know what I like and what I don't like and I do not need anyone else to tell me what I should like - too much blah blah around!

While it is a little generic to ask of what acts/ music of the underground scene you might appreciate, I often find it is often more interesting (and revealing) in seeing what music OUTSIDE of the scene individuals listen too. Do you have any artists/ styles (or even skeletons in the closet!) you want to reveal? well, I have to disappoint you a bit I think - I listen for about 99% to the music of our scene; noise, industrial, ambient, experimental music. Not much more I'm afraid...

While is might not be known to many people, you have a musical project operating under the guise of 'Tortura'. Can you give some information about this project and what you want to accomplish with it? Well, it's not exactly my project... in fact it's something between Dr Demon and Dr Blood you know... or between Igor Z. and Vlad S. if you want... I think they want to make music they like at that specific moment in time. For sure it has to have a dark angle and an industrial atmosphere because I understand that's what they like - they're putting a new album together somewhere at nova zembla - I hope all goes according to plan and they don't get stuck over there...

Finalities? you have a great magazine! (ED: why thank you good Doctor!)



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SOUND REVIEWS

ALL REVIEWS BY RICHARD STEVENSON UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Ab Ovo (???) "Triode" CD 2000 Fluttering Dragon

To my surprise (yet again), Fluttering Dragon have released a very interesting album that is quite removed from the neo-classical/dark ambient releases that the label have previously released. The release in question, is much along the lines of the great Simple Dead CD (reviewed in Issue #4), but at the same times completely different. Minimalist ambient electronica (with a detectable dark streak) would be the broadest description I could give to this, as it is constructed on pretty subdued beats and rhythms that are structured in quite a cutting edge manner. For this reason, parallels to the Anti-Zen camp would have to be referenced. However not to be fooled by a minimalist description, these compositions are complex in construction and neither is specifically quiet - in essence the two elements you might normally associate with minimalism. It is rather a circumstance where the tuneful elements are kept to a minimum, as is the actual track flow, rather choosing to gradually evolve the atmospheres over long compositions. Subdued programmed beats, blips, electric hums, cut up textures, pulsating rhythms and the like are spiced together into melanges of sound that are further tweaked and twisted along the way. Track 5 (the title track) stands out, as it reminded me of Black Lung from the outset (which can only be read as a compliment in my eyes). Given the complex minimalism (who'd have thought!) of each piece, it is difficult to descriptively do each composition justice. But if chilled out ambient electronica is of interest to you, this could be exactly what you are seeking.

Ah Cama-Soltz (Bel) "U-Boot" LP 2001 Nautilus

Continuing the aquatic theme of the Nautilus series, the renowned death industrialists Ah Cama-Soltz have taken on this challenge with rather successful results. Opener 'U-Boot Theme' with its synth melody encapsulated within swirling noise, the album takes a slow decent into the increasingly murky depths particularly when it forges into the sparse yet bass intoned 'deep inferno' (this piece includes elements akin to bubbling air pockets floating up towards the sea's surface). Sinking even further into a deep sea trench, 'Ocean' is a slow moving and slow morphing piece appearing as if it the oceanic tides dictates its movement. 'Fate' incorporates again some ominous sounding synth elements in amongst shifting muffled textures to round out the first side. 'U-68' with the framework of murky noise shifting synth elements and sparse sonar blips, achieves a level of intensity not reached on preceding tracks. Additionally, with this track paying homage to the legacy of this particular submarine (information provided on the sleeve indicates it was responsible for sinking 33 ships) it is quite easy to picture the sub silently and majestically gliding into attack (with a more suitable soundtrack backing playing out). Sleering into 'Iceberg' territory, this track is a gloomy & stifled isolationist piece - and would be considered an authentic isolationist piece if it were not for faintly detectable synth elements (but mind you this element works fantastically here). 'Lord of Steel' contains a heavy atmosphere of tidal shifting sounds and subtly bubbling textures, making way for the final piece 'Sinking' - yet another fantastically brooding compositions of subtle muffled sounds and slow morphing synth tunes. However, when the synth tune transcends its surrounds to embody both an epic and forlorn atmosphere, it clearly reminds me of Necrophorus's last album - the glacial and aquatic themes 'Drifting in Motion' (which is a massive compliment to give and rather fitting ending to the album). On the aesthetic front, the music is pressed onto deep blue vinyl to match the concept, whilst housed in a visually pleasing sleeve creating a fine release for both label and artist.

Aluminium Noise (USA) "Totally Fucking Lost" CDR 2001 Sacred Sound Noise

From the project name and CDR title, I must admit that I was really expecting some full throttle noise assault, yet what is actually presented is far removed from this initial perception. Aluminium Noise present some really fantastic droneage/dark ambient atmosphere that are intelligently and expertly composed to be able to claim a spot alongside the likes of Yen Pox - (Yes, I know this is a reasonably big call but I still considered it to be suitably justified). Also given the structure of the songs appearing to have little resemblance to their synthetic origins (ie: keyboards/synthesizers), rather encompassing an organic and sometimes quite raw distortion tone, it draws parallels to the sound-works of Daniel Menche. The five compositions on the CD, span between eight minutes (at the shortest) and up to seventeen minutes at the longest - each holding its own particular charm, yet remaining consistent within the ebb and flow, steadily amazing to grating tension or alternately, subtly shifting off into the infinite distance. Despite 'pain reminds me that I am alive' being introduced with some pretty basic guitar pedal distortion, it quickly disappears to reveal slow throbbing atmospheres and shifting sounds that fleetingly appear to have an orchestral edge. Again this track morphs through a myriad of sections, where a particularly attacking pulse characterises the later section of this track. 'Mass in time of war I' contains a rather metallic texture to the rotational loops - stacking one layer over the last to create quite a structured calamity (some orchestral subtleties can be detected in the final minutes of the piece). This track directly interlinks with 'mass in time of war II', which holds an even rawer and attacking framework to the distortion drones, however later on it does quieten down into more brooding territory particularly with the use of a sampled and manipulated symphony drone. The final track 'patterns of dysfunction' holds a guitar drone edge to one of the early elements, while the others evoke deeper tonal sounds and subtle reverberations (once again utilising the building/manipulating method to drive forward the composition). The packaging is DiY in aesthetic with spray painted card sleeve and screen-printed insert, that while slightly crude, certainly serves its purpose more than adequately. Being limited to only 50 copies this might be hard to find, yet I have a sneaky suspicion that this might be snapped up for a more official release given its musical excellence. (Note: my hunch turned out to be correct as project soloist Jason Crumer recently informed me that this CD will be re-released in 1000 copies on Crimethink. Check for details on www.crimethink.com).

Amber Asylum (USA) "The Supernatural Parlour Collection" CD 2000 Release Entertainment

Although I have not heard the albums that preceded this, their fourth release, Amber Asylum's "The Supernatural Parlour Collection" commences strongly with 'Black Lodge', where the light yet incessant snare march sits submissively below the lightly plucked emotive guitar and classical string tune, that gradually increase in force (in more ways than one, considering the group has its nucleus with Kris Force), sweeping off in a wash of atmospheric waves of distortion. All in all the song sets an immaculate atmosphere that is somewhat difficult to top (anticipation and expectation can be a terrible curse in this regard). Things never quite reach the same heights as set here, but rather opt for an unusual mixture of classical sentimentalities and more modern musical approaches to sound interpretation (such is the cover version of a Carlo Menotti operatic piece on 'Black Swan' in the way that a guitar both fits whilst traditionally speaking is a foreign element). A beautiful neo-classical tone arrives in splendour on 'Silence of the Setting Sun', yet sits within a song structure more akin to a modern rock piece, again highlighting this mixture of the old sound and modern approach. Depressive string quartet harmonies and mournful female vocals form a subdued ode on 'The Shepard Remix' (I am unsure how this actually constitutes a 'remix' in the modern sense), traversing a similar vein of emotion on 'Disembodied Healer' injecting sparse vocals and select bass/guitar structure (that ultimately leans towards an experimental tone). The sixth offering, 'Black Lodge Reprise', is not at all that recognisable in relation to the framework of the opening track, rather that the main elements of percussion and time have been removed in favour of focussing on the distorted

washes of sound (guitar generated) and melodious violin drones. With the bio giving a nod to the likes of Godspeed you Black Emperor!, in regard of this track you would not be far wrong. To conclude the album in true style (that will also offend the hardened purists), Kris Force and enlourage tackle the task of covering none other than the composition of Black Sabbath's title. Particularly with the use of violin and guttural bass/drums this sounds like what you would expect My Dying Bride to have come up with if they recorded this cover around the time of the "Turn Loose the Swans" album - albeit with a female vocalist (mind you the result is none other than a very sombre and doom-riddled vibe that is both bizarre and compelling). With an overall opinion that this album is patchy in a few places and brilliant in others, I will admit that later wins out overall.

Amoeba (USA) "Pivot" CD 2000 Release Entertainment

After becoming acquainted with the guitar stylings and standard song structures of this Robert Rich side project, I thought I knew what to expect with this second album. Well surely things could not be that predictable, could they? Yes, the same guitar/vocal/percussion song structure is here, but the song writing sound has become quite pop influenced! Fleeting hints of jazz and rock influences can be detected filtering through the pop sensibilities of the opener, 'Fireflies'. Working with bass rhythms and steel guitar this continues into the straight edge of the pop-rock 'No Empty Promises' that surges forward with slight programming and cello backing. The vocals of Mr Rich embellish most songs in a dreamy, softly sung manner that both follow and hold the melody of the compositions, that incidentally for all their structure often create an understated atmospheric result (this also has much to do with the warm sound production). A middle album track 'Moonlight Flowers', with its sweet acoustic noodlings, reflects the title perfectly (all the while sitting over a resonating bowed cello), whilst late album track 'Underground' also deserves an individual mention due to its bleak progressive rock sound. I am still unsure whether I prefer the more sombre mood of the debut to the slightly up-tempo twist of this second album (only time will tell). An interesting release nonetheless.

As All Die (USA)/Veinke (USA) "In Vacuum of Blackened Space/Destitution" Split CD 2000 Dragon Flight Recordings

As All Die's 6 tracks present a somewhat unusual blend of neo-folk and neo-classical that appears to have hints of influence from the black metal sector. This metal comparison is mostly due to the vocals that are present through most of the tracks, ranging from the whispered, spoken, and choir-esque to the downright gruff, but all in a generally metal-like style. While I am not adverse to extreme metal vocals where they have their rightful place, within these musical pieces, however, I feel that they slightly disjoint the atmospheres being evoked. As for the music the compositions tend to work with mid-paced strummed acoustic guitars with keyboard layers replicating orchestral strings, piano, organ etc to build the musical backing (or otherwise acting as the total focus on others). It can be said that despite the tracks being mid-paced, a dark brooding undercurrent remains quite evident throughout. Track 4 features an introductory idea that, while interesting, simply does not work positively for me (urgent, disjointed and dissonant piano lines and vocal screams). This opening segment is then stripped back to a darkly sweeping orchestral section that incidentally ends up reviving the intro segment, only to fall away yet again (this pattern is then subsequently repeated). Criticisms aside, the sixth and last As All Die track is my personal favourite, stirring up a forlorn, melancholic mood via intricate acoustic guitar work, sparse piano and a few additional synth/sound layers for good measure. Some good ideas are evident in these offerings, thus at least it will be interesting to see how subsequent recording span out. With the review of the second half of this split album it is being undertaken somewhat in reverse as I have actually already reviewed Veinke's newer debut album (on Trumvirate) in last issue. A single track at just a touch over 30 minutes is Veinke's offering, an extended piece of catacombal yet slightly orchestral dark ambience. Thick bass sonics and other amassed sounds converge at varying points, some floating while others linger. Disembodied and indecipherable vocalisations randomly appear along with snippets of other noise clutter, including hints of tunes that seep in through the bleakness, never really achieving their aim, thus adding to the half dream/half memory type aura. Some tones suggest a comparison to guitar distortion and feedback, but never become blatantly obvious - yet on the other hand a creepy and macabre piano tune can be heard far off in the distance during the later section of the composition. Without going into any further descriptive gymnastics, basically I can say that this track is as good as any on the debut.

As All Die (USA) "Time Of War And Conflict" CD 2001 Crowd Control Activities

As a recording from times past unfolds (WWII or thereabouts...), and a brass punctuated, choral celebration rages, a voice proclaims, "We will win, I say, victory or death!" a pep talk for the legions headed out to war. It sets the appropriate stage for As All Die's acoustic guitar and desolate synth excursions into apocalyptic anguish, alit with a steadfast, forged in lead idealism. "Victory Hymn" connects with the aspirations of that speech, as dreary synths, emoting tones of spiritual decline and questions of wavering faith, forlorn, shimmering violins and the distinctive vocals of Clint Listing (Long Winter's Stare, Dragon Flight Recordings) repeat the urgent pleas of the aforementioned introduction. A backdrop of strummed acoustic guitars beautifully accentuates the shadowy synths and, again, the distinctive vocals (enunciation is at the forefront, quite appealing) during "Johnny Got His Gun." After a slight pause, this smoothly leads into "Mother Earth," in which the mood grows contemplative, inspiring a provocative spoken word recitation seemingly drawn from parchment texts full of fatalistic convictions; memoirs of hope, nothing more than cold, blackened embers in the hearth of eternity. The completely despondent timbres etched by piano and overcast cello into the hollow soul of "The Longest Day" drip like tears on the finger picked acoustic guitar, Clint's subdued vocals contorting into every conceivable shape of anguish and misery imaginable. Powerfully despondent music, steered with fervent determination towards the disintegrating horizon of man. (Used by permission from Outburn www.outburn.com) -J.D. Smith

Asche (???) "Distorted Disco" CD 2000 Ant-Zen

I have listened to this CD quite a few times and still cannot fathom its apparently random exploration of electronic musical styles. Dark droning ambient in the opening segments ('The Sound on the Shell'), it then jumps to a whip-cracking noise-fest and beat programming on 'Kiss the Whip!' The stakes are then upped even further on 'Riding on the Atomic C.E.' and while its power noise beats and technoid rhythms are damn heavy, the track would still be quite dance-floor friendly. 'Another Kind of Being' gives a good go at redefining the word 'harsh' with its slamming and corrosive drum'n'noise, but when the track 'Zapped' arrives it sounds as if a completely different artist is at the helm - this piece is straight up techno, and quite friendly to the ears at that. This is not to say that this track is bad by any means, rather that it seems to sever any links to the tracks preceding it, thus tending to slightly disjoint the flow of the album. A later track, 'Inside the Sarcophagus', plays out as a composition that bridges subdued noise industrial and dark ambience coming across as sounding similar to that of Brighter Death Now (which is only a compliment in my eyes). Heavier and sinister themes again pervade 'Peter', where power noise/electronics are showcased in all the glory of its screaming white noise and rough and ready programming, with a similar style used on the following two (and final) tracks of the 11 track disc. (Note: the hidden/unlisted track is yet another diversion with a completely bizarre drugged out drum'n'bass/electronic number further embellished with distorted sung vocals and organ tune). To say this CD is eclectic is beyond an understatement, but it is best

to be aware of this fact when approaching your first listen - it will help in understanding what is being fed into your eardrums to enable you to identify the elements that align positively with your personal tastes (whether it is dark ambient, techno, drum'n'bass, power electronics, etc).

Ask Embia (Nor) "questions asked" CD 2001 Fluttering Dragon

Encompassing gothic and industrial infused sounds (and here I mean 'industrial' in the band type tradition), from the outset this CD was going to have difficulties in winning me over, as these two styles don't exactly set my heart ablaze. So after listening to this a number of times, I have to declare that my initial reservations justified. Yes, I can admit that this is good for what it is, but I basically find it difficult to be objective, when I simply don't care for the styles it encompasses. Anyway, the framework of the music is presented in the format of a band, including a female vocalist fronting the project and accommodating a heavy reliance on keyboards (guitars and bass are also present, along with a drum machine to complete the unit). The 10 songs that make up the album are often plodding, driven forward by a drum machine, guitar and bass, whilst the keyboards and mid range vocals are relied upon for the delivery of more emotive elements. Romantic baroque sentiments are to be found on 'into the day', yet are unfortunately all but obliterated with the chugging guitar riff. The brooding atmospherics and piano melancholy of the third instrumental track 'Savn (til Eivor)' go part the way to redemption. Unfortunately this is rendered useless when upon a guitar noodling individual plays a/the 'over the rainbow' tune in the final bar (I have no idea what the band were thinking when they included this...). 'Not Pleased' with its clean guitars and understated female vocals reminds me of 'Machines in the Garden's' approach, coupled with the use of meandering piano and avoiding heavier guitars, happens to be one of the better track of the album. The final track, 'Dream' is also worthy of a mention, being a slow depressive waltz based on programmed (muffled) beats, broad synth passages, clean guitars and sweetly sorrowful female vocals. Anyway, before I ramble on too much longer, if you are able to filter through my obvious prejudices, the determination of this is the type of album for you will be a much easier task.

Ataraxia (Ita) "Suenos" CD 2001 Cruel Moon BC

With Ataraxia's previous album 'Lost Atlantis' (reviewed back in issue 36), one of my complaints at the time was in relation some pretty synthetic programming percussion not doing the historic themes of the music justice. Well, it seems that Ataraxia have heralded my call and reverted to the predominant use of real instrumentation (ahem, I think I am being just a little presumptuous) and, in my eyes, are all the stronger for it. On this album Ataraxia appear to be encompassing a greater apocalyptic neo-folk sound than ever before, and for this reason alone this is clearly their strongest release to date. Starting powerfully with hand percussion and commanding male chanted vocals on 'Parti de mal', track 2 'Saderatadon' reveals a sweeping acoustic guitar driven atmosphere with plenty of percussive elements, flutes and the ever unique and stunning vocals of Francesca certainly evoking visions of times long past. The re-working of a traditional French ministerial song on 'Saderatadon' plods along with percussion and guitar, as the female vocals take flight above (prior to quickening the pace and urgency of playing towards the end). A romantic accordion tune being the basis for is greatly enhanced with a (gradually rising and falling) full orchestral backing, that despite being synth generated does not sound as such (and this goes for all elements where synthesizers and keyboards are used to replicate orchestral instruments). One of few tracks with English vocals, 'I love every waving things' is particularly emotive, with a mixture of sung and spoken female vocals. The music here ranges from orchestral strings, harps & clarinets to guitars. The darker flamenco styled guitar work in 'Encrucijada' travels a more solemn path, likewise reflected in Francesca's more commanding vocal style (with this track stretching over some 7 minutes). The solemn flavour is again embodied by the horn and percussion driven march of 'Funeral in Dabai', switching between morose and more epic atmospheres. Beautiful in its reflective aura 'The Corals of Aqaba' is (again) built around an acoustic guitar and female vocal track along with clarinet and associated backing layers. With there being nothing quite like a celebratory trumpeting march to finish an album, 'Nemrut Dag'i is an appropriately majestic ending to the album. In passing, I can safely say that I'm fast becoming a fan of Ataraxia particularly, if they continue to forge along on this path - presenting their traditional/historical musical explorations, whilst avoiding more modern musical sounding elements that have detracted from the historic aura on previous works.

Auger (USA) "like little machines" CD 2001 the Retrix

Auger (an unknown project to me) present a CD of live improvised recordings dating back to August, 1999. To make my reviewing task difficult, the CD contains 9 tracks yet only 8 are listed on the cover... hmmm. Anyway, with a dense industrial basis and fractal samples being overlaid, the opening track 'more or less human' is akin to a noisier version of Hazard's sound experiments, with the samples gradually aligning as loose percussion. 'Smeas of light' takes a slightly more subdued approach with a dense droning structure that pitch shifts between speakers to disorientating effect. With a scaping tonal basis, the seed inside the bud builds aural intensity along with shifting and improvised sounding drones. Followed by the fantastically titled 'spread your ghostly wings', it contains a loose percussive structure that swings in and out of alignment, creating a chaotic affair. Throughout its lengthy journey the basic framework is tweaked and morphed, including a subdued aquatic segment that takes over midway through and sees the track take a gradual downward spiral into a minimalist piece. 'A boundary is not a wall' is the most improvised piece thus far with random pitched noise and an underbelly of droning frequencies that unfortunately it is not a real attention grabber. This improvised sound transfers across to 'inside the trees', yet with the increased resonating textures it is slightly more successful (I found the extreme swinging between quiet tonal musings and loud outbursts became rather distracting). Shifting into ultra minimalist sound collage mindset, the title track contains distant blips and electro static that requires the volume to be tinkered with to actually hear what is going on, but when considering the previous track I was initially quite wary of some unforeseen outburst reeking havoc on my speakers (thankfully that does not eventuate). The later tracks on the album are a chaotic collection of found sounds, blips, drones and general sonic clutter as embodied within 'neg' that forge onward unrepentant for its 10 minute span. The final unnamed piece (lets call it 'the unnamed') works on rather subtle shifts of electro-static drones that rise and recede throughout, with the final segment adding a touch of non-obtrusive clutter. In winding up the review I don't know how often this will end up being played when considering the vast amount of albums I own, but it was at least an interesting item to review.

Autumn (Ger) "A Romance of Art" MCD 2001 Sin Organisation

Although Autumn have been around for some 16-17 years, this is actually the first release of theirs, that I have come across. This MCD it appears to be a collection of Autumn's songs lifted off prior tape releases and have been specifically re-mixed for this format. Starting with a very nice melancholic piece of neo-classical romanticism (the sweeping strings & forlorn piano melodies presenting wondrous visions), this passes all too moving quickly through to 'Windows'. With a jangly clean guitar, programmed kit percussion and varying synth lines, it creates a nice twist on the neo-folk/dark wave sound. Likewise, with the vocals being clearly sung in a rather commanding full-throated style, they compliment the music in a very positive manner. The perfectly titled 'Serenades' with its composition expertly composed and multi layered, this neo classical piece swells the emotions of the heart. The more urgent, 'Glaube'

uses rough yet melodic stabs of piano keys, making way for aggressive percussion and fleeting tune that somewhat reminds me of Allerseelen's more aggressive musical approach (the female vocals further solidifying this perception). The title track is clearly darkwave in its focus and intent with the smoothly programmed beat being the first indicator. Additional elements - the strains of a soft acoustic guitar, subdued keyboard lines and far off echoed vocals - work particularly well, creating an emotive and very atmospheric production. Although 'flaming' threatens to really break loose, the harmonious soundscape never actually does, with spoken word vocals (akin to radio voices) sit over layers of programming and orchestral keys. 'Blue Fortress' is another track that bones neo-classical intent with dark wave construction resulting in quick paced, heavily programmed track, with dual male/female vocals and associated synth tunes. The all too short 'Epilogue Dawn' returns back to the beautiful aura of the first track, and in essence, is the perfect way to conclude the 8 autumnal compositions. On the whole this CD is a great example of a group that can expertly straddle genres (those of neo-classical, neo-folk and dark wave) and clearly have the song writing skills to back up the task.

Bad Sector (Ita) Contagious Orgasm (Jap) "Vacuum Pulse" CD 2000 Old Europa Café

Vacuum Pulse is the CD re-issue of a cassette, CD and cassette both released by Old Europa Café, the CD version including bonus tracks. The agenda is one in which each band utilizes the sound sources of the other in the creation of something that is indicative of both bands, a melding of sonic ideals. Contagious Sector's 'Vacuum' opens with a brittle resonance, like being pierced by the blinding glare that glimmers from a field of sun-bleached diamonds, subsequently devoured by magma that boils up from the earth's core, a surge of lifeblood slowly hardening Mother Earth's arteries. Seeking respite, the sounds pass through many veins, sonic capillaries bounding through convoluted alleyways within the body, from fuzzy and unclear to skittish and electronic, ending up in a place that resonates off of the inosphere... (The sounds are not confined, they explode, dispersing and dissipating outwards... freedom through the wound.) Weird machinery loops with a vocal quality ignite the shuffling of scattered warehouse debris and bubbling liquid during 'Pulse'. Waves of radioactive noise rise to thrash the proceedings, a swirling, spasmodic revelry of rattled noises and voice samples that utilize reverberate as a stepladder out of the mayhem, but never quite free of its clutches. They remain a part of the confined storm within the abandoned warehouse. Each of the four tracks flows with unencumbered resiliency, moving, shuffling, skidding from here and sliding into there, pockets of sound and noise ('EMP' gets positively chaotic-the screech of desperate machines seeking refuge from the manipulation at hand). An excellent melding of styles! — JC Smith

Bad Sector (Ita) "Toroidal Body" 7" + MCDR 2001 Pre-Feed/Elbon

The criminally under-recognised Bad Sector returns with a new release spanning two formats and two recordings sessions. The 7" part of the set encompasses the two the newest Bad Sector tracks, whilst the CD includes three pieces from the 'Dolmen' recording session (which have already yielded a CD and 7"). Interestingly the new track has a more focussed electronic/rhythmic approach than what I have heard from the project to date. The first vinyl track, 'Hen', starts off with the usual computer-type noise, yet with the gradual addition of various electronic percussive layers it builds into a slow moving composition that is quite comparable to the techoid sound coming from some sectors of the Ani-Zen camp (yet the ominous keyboard melodies that form the backing of the composition betray the typical Bad Sector aesthetic). 'Pan', the second vinyl track, is more mid-paced and runs a fine line between the classic Bad Sector dark ambience and the new rhythmic approach. The combination of dark keyboard layers and alien-like vocalisations processed with the rigid programmed percussion work supremely well, and is particularly enhanced with choir-like textures midway through. The three tracks from the Dolmen sessions encompass a much more deep space oriented sound with ominous shifts of keyboards and heavy (but fleeting) percussion. The first CD track, 'Egidea', works on so many levels with multitudes of layers (sporadic martial-type percussion, computer glitched sound, a sweeping atmospheric melody, etc) that makes it all too easy to succumb entirely to its grandiose dark ambient aura. 'Lila (20A remix)' is slightly more experimental with sporadic electronic sounds and glitches forming loose rhythmic patterns, while the final track 'Ibor (Coded)' opts for percussive yet sweeping dark ambience. The cover image of an ominous sky severed by power poles and electric wires is a perfect visual counterpart to the compositions of Bad Sector. As it is limited to only 300 copies, you might have some trouble finding one of these as I know the labels are already fully sold out.

Baradelan (Ger) "Anorgonia In The Carcinomatous Shrinking Biopathy" CDR 2000 Membrum Debile Propaganda

With a name like Baradelan, an anagram of Aldebaran, one would be lead to believe that Baradelan is a tip of the hat to the masters of cracking anonymity, Inade. But Thomas Sauerbie, Baradelan's lone dark soundscape technician, informs me that the name originated with the track, 'Aldebaran Of The Hyades', from the deep cosmic plains explored on The Place Where The Black Stars Hang. Meaning that the genesis of Baradelan is aligned with (and inspired by) the godfather of sonic darkness, Lustmord. Anorgonia In The Carcinomatous Shrinking Biopathy (title derived from the writings of Wilhelm Reich) is a fascinating excursion down the desolate corridors of space, a clinical analysis of dark soundscape terrain devoid of hope. "Sudden Infant Death Syndrome" breathes and ripples with vast fluttering electronic noises and a pulsing tone that skulks inauspiciously like the Grim Reaper waiting to pounce. The fact that the vacuum of sounds incorporated here reach across the vast, empty cosmos, adds a delicious layer of discomfort to an already expected finality (see title). Though the death in question is gentle, like a pillow pressed over the face of the sleeping. The fluttering electronic noise continues during 'Organoic Pulsation,' assisted by a procession of sporadic percussion that teeters unsteadily above. Synths emit ominously goose pimples running free over chilled flesh during 'Cold Clinical Theology.' The empty horizon that creeps forth is never clearly realized. The scope of tones here emanate from the internal vacancy of soul, out towards the unattainable horizon; the mood is one of solitude, enveloped in morose intentions: lifeless... despondent... so very alone. 'Carcinomatous Shrinking Biopathy' resonates with agitated waves that surge and throb with electronic urgency, as if this course of action will wash the cancerous corrosion away. Instead, though, it is only made to batlle, inflame more torment, on a body already wasting away... And the dim, flickering bulbs of the endless corridors (of space, and deflated spirit) radiate gloomily as one wanders, not towards the light, but towards uncertainty... Though precious moments of all-encompassing darkness sprinkled throughout may confirm the influence of Lustmord, Baradelan move well beyond that pitch-black genesis, the air of uncertainty a major part of the burgeoning sound. I'm definitely keeping an ear out for the next Baradelan release... — JC Smith

Bardoseneticcube (Rus) "Necklace" CDR advance copy 2000 Athanor

This unknown and almost unpronounceable project has been snapped up by Athanor after the original version was released as a 100 limited CDR (on some label called Black Dead Rabbit?). Furnishing it with an official bio, it goes on to state *this was considered by us as the most important 'dark ambient' recording we have heard since Lustmord's: The Place Where The Black Stars Hang*". Pretty big words you might say, now the question is, does this album come through with the good to back up such a statement? In a single sentence, I think this release falls just short of reaching the same breadth and depth of the aforementioned

album, yet I do acknowledge that this is still a powerful recording. Forging forward from the outset with cyclic pulsations, track one sets the scene to make way for track two to take on a broader and more atmospheric frame that sweeps off into nebulous regions. Continuing on the building and evolving format, track three arrives as a mass of urgent party, metallic sweeping atmospheric sound textures (and conflures up an image of a ancient monolithic generator positioned at the centre of the cosmos, that for unnumbered aeons has been powering the infinite expansion of the universe...). More brooding and catatonic, track four uses deeper more minimalist movements to create its atmosphere of cosmic resonance, including just a hint of melody and slow rhythmic percussive sounds (and to an extent actually reminds me of early Archon Satani). Spiralling pulses categorise the length seventh track, with the sound palate working on a vertical axis with its rising/falling framework, again bringing visions of an idling archaic generator. However at around the five minute mark this track verges off into a panoramic styled soundscape with the whole atmosphere becoming increasingly urgent. On the eighth and final piece, with the use of slow echoes pulses & cyclic drones, it verges on an Inade like quality particularly when enhanced with tribalesque percussion in the final segment. Taken as a whole, this recording does a splendid job of evoking visions of the cold barren cosmos.

Brainlego (Aus) "Perimelasma" 3"CDR 2000 label: KETTLE

Given the promotional blurb that promised "A dark apocalyptic vision", this is a touch different to what I was expecting, for Brainlego's "Perimelasma" contains elements of both electronica-type programming and more subdued experimental textures. The programming aspect is evident from the bass pulse tune of the opening track ("Perimelasma A") that becomes quite catatonic with random blips and static. The second track, "Phyllum Mollusca", contains a pure electronica sound with treated vocals, clear tone and beat cut-ups that are actually quite heavy and corrosive in sound. Referencing the promo statement quoted above, the tracks 'Shit into Silver' and 'Scry me a Mirror' deliver the goods by way of subdued drone-oriented soundscapes mingled with static, warped reverberations and computer generated clutter, all of which point to Hazard's recent style of sound experimentation -- in other words, it is certainly to my liking. Given both facets of Brainlego's sounds are executed to a high standard, it creates pleasant diversity with what are still essentially complementary sounds.

Brighter Death Now (Swe) "Obsessis" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industry

While the new BDN offering is finally with us, the first thing that strikes you is that its cover is presented in a white sleeve with pink writing instead of the trademark black tones and necrose symbol. Depicting a facial image of an innocent female teenager, it is only upon closer inspection that a nasty twist is evident, creating a cover that is quite reminiscent of the artwork of Trevor Brown. Further referencing the inner sleeve, this reveals images of a dental inspection being undertaken on another teenage girl. While these pictures in themselves are not at all shocking, they begin to become slightly disturbing when considered in the context of the album. Forging even further into a power electronics aesthetic, BDN have gradually removed themselves from the death industrial sounds with which the project rose to prominence (especially during the "Great Death" trilogy), at the same time partially reverting to the harsh schizophrenic sounds of Lille Roger (the 1980s pre-BDN project). Although there has been much debate about the pros and cons of this project's direction over the past few albums, when the storming ear piercing tones, loosely formed loops and stoically psychotic vocals converge in the opening seconds of 'Intercourse -- Now is the Time', I knew this album was going to be an absolute corker! Amassing in a much tighter framework, 'Hipp Hipp Hurray -- I will Kill you Today' showcases an out-of-control machine loop with the ranting and obliterated vocals reaching a greater heightened urgency in their feverous tone. With vocals being somewhat subservient to the harsh noise layers (as well as the processed, flesh-shredding treatment), there is little if any opportunity to decipher content, a task rendered even more impossible with no lyrics sheet. 'A B C D -- Learn a Lesson' partially revisits the older death industrial style, giving a certain level of respite from the first two ear-rearing offerings. Here low bass throbs, wavering sonic layers and what appears to be a distorted voice sample merge to create an interplay via an addition-and-subtraction style (that in itself forges a sparse, looping style). On the title track, queasy machine idlings and high pitched squeals are juxtaposed against sounds of children playing, all in all creating a somewhat sickening result (in regard to both the sonic tone and the implications of the content). When a lone voice begins repeating 'Oh no' as an introduction to 'I Can't get no Satisfaction', it is immediately evident that you are in for one wildy filthy ride! With this track having the most easily decipherable vocals that mostly repeats the title, the seedy sonic underbelly consists of slow machine draws and coagulated sound textures (ranging from guttural to squealing), all contributing to a very lasty offering. With Ling B Doll of Deutsch Nepal featuring on 'In Circles -- Psycho Circles', the partially quirky main loop could easily be credited as his input, with the BDN stamp arriving via being freshly being wrapped in harsh static and shredded vocalisations. Overall, for a strict comparison, this album is reminiscent of 'Innerwar' mixed up with the harshness of last year's 'untitled?', creating a product that points forward to CMII's constantly growing power electronics focus whilst simultaneously harkening back to the old school harsh noise aesthetics of the Lille Roger days. While it has been stated that this album represents the completion of a cycle, God only knows (and I question if such an entity could possibly exist in the realm of BDN!) what depths of the deranged mind of Kaptain Karmanik we will be plunged to on future confessions. Until then this provides ample redemption.

Canaan (Itz) "Brand New Babylon" CD 2000 Prophecy Productions/ Eibon Records

Canaan have been toying with their quite unique style of dark ambient infused/ gothically tinged/doom laden melancholia for two albums prior to this release (one being the epic 'Walk into my Open Womb' DCD), yet, not to be content with a simple continuance of what has preceded it, 'Brand New Babylon' sees the introduction of moody yet catchy pop like structures to their song framework. Dark orchestral soundscapes introduce the album with 'Theta Division', where the only hint at the 'band' framework of the group is the sparse rock drumming (the full band sound arrives full flight on 'In Un Cielo Di Pace', which includes - of all things! - morose whistling!). Pushing into a downy vibed yet up-tempo sound, 'Sperm like Honey' is heavily reminiscent of that certain sound created during the 'Disintegration' era of the Cure, most clearly in relation to the guitar style and sound - not that this comparison takes away from the quality of the song by any stretch. (Ironically by having made mention of such a comparison, is it a revelation or mere coincidence that the following sparse dark ambient piece is entitled 'disintegrate'?). While not being all that different to what Canaan are about, 'La Simmetria Del Dolore' reminds me of where the progressive Norwegian band 'In the Woods' took their sound from early pagan metal roots, even down to the more urgent vocals of Mauro. For another slight twist the Middle Eastern strains of 'For a Drowning Soul' reveal yet another dimension of the Canaan experience (with vocals being convincingly authentic for the structure of the song), while the bleak instrumental piece 'The Circle of Waters' creates a beautifully depressive aura that transforms from merely floating to absolutely soaring when the slow percussion alters to up-tempo drumming. For yet another fleeting comparison, 'The Meaning of Solitude (return to 9117)' with its brooding synths, sparse guitars and half sung/half spoken vocals (that sound as if on the verge of collapse), brings to mind the best moments of another cult Italian band, Monumentum -- and for anyone who appreciates this band it is a compliment not to be taken lightly. At a shade over 10 minutes the final track, 'A Descent to Babylon', makes use of its epic format sprawling out in a cinematic style, with the swirling guitar riffs and mournful tunes constantly picking up pace as it forges ahead (the very last

segment delving one last time into experimental ambience). As with the previous Canaan releases, in amongst their overall distinctive sound, it can be split up into those moments of dark introspective ambience, juxtaposed against the band/song styled framework, thus with the distillation of their best ideas, interbedded with new evolutions of their sound this is easily the most immediately accessible Canaan album produced to date.

Celluloid Mata (Fra) "Sable" CD 2000 Ant-Zen

The well established project Celluloid Mata have now found their way into the Ant-Zen roster, which is understandable given this fresh sounding album of intelligent electronica mixed with power noise stylings. The backing of 'Barbarous Coast', which is dark ambient in scope, is perfectly complemented with a deep and rhythmic mid-paced beat that carries things along nicely. This deep rhythmic approach is again utilised, yet taken up a notch (or three!) on 'Fodish', during which you simply can't but help finding yourself nodding your head too. On the flip side, other tracks such as 'At Bunkers' and 'Pop Pom Doll' take on a much rougher power noise and slamming beat driven sound in noisy and rigid frameworks. 'Del mar' does its best to induce ear bleeding in the listener, as the track simply consists of nothing but a singular high pitched electronic squeal, while again on the experimental tangent. 'We Sync' is a low whispered voice being barely audible in the articulation of the words and sentences. Late album composition and title track has a pummelling sound akin to that of label mate Imminent (Starvation) on the 'North' CD and is another example of Celluloid Mata's flair for creating simple yet engaging beat styled sounds. Overall the tracks are mostly orientated to the heavier and noisier rhythmic beats, with these elements usually taking the main focus while more subdued layers of drones and sounds carry along the more minimalist tunes (the final track makes particularly good use of a subtly progressing tune that is devoid of any beats or rhythms). Apart from the music, Stefan Alt presents yet another great idea for the cover with a transparent film over-wrap and a series of cards presented in the style of Polaroid photographs.

Chaos As Shelter (Ist) "Midnight Prayer/Illusion" 2CD 2001 Crowd Control Activities

I first heard Vadim Gusis' Chaos As Shelter on the In The Shelter Of Chaos CD from The Rectrix, quite possibly the finest release from 2000. I garnered further enjoyment with the limited release, The Devil's Brothers, from Ignis Project. Therefore, my expectations were high as I anxiously awaited this double disc release of promised dark soundscape excellence. I suppose my expectations may have been too high, as the first two tracks on disc one, Midnight Prayer, failed to enrapture me as I wanted. Not that they are bad, quite the contrary, but there were slight elements (the laughter on 'The Temptation Of St. Anthony' seemed almost of an amusement park/haunted house variety, the tones of the keyboards on 'In Nomine Patris' did not ring as substantial... appropriate... something?!...). Of course, my initial hesitancy was unnecessary, as most everything here (including the aforementioned first two tracks -- having now heard them repeatedly, they are more than worthy -- quite intriguing, actually) borders on brilliance, if not successfully attains it! The world of Chaos As Shelter is one that escorts the listener into the enigma of the unknown nether regions of the earth, a latticed latticework of rickety scaffolding constructed across broad, mysterious plains of concrete and squalor. To continue with Discone, 'Dead Sea Song' madly (and) ripples through sewage across brick and mortar, the destitute remains of the crumbled dreams from above. A humming tone that somehow incorporates impetus rises to upend 'Mauka,' before percussive rattling beats on the agitatedly buzzing textures of unknown origin. The mottled landscapes contain sparse textural elements, moments of blueque noise (but not of volume, per se, more of sensation, surging forth before slipping back into a hiding place), moments of scattered resonance, moments of uncertainty enveloped in curiosity. Though it may seem to meander, the music of Chaos As Shelter is never less than intriguing, flashing wild, flickering images of esoteric origin on the uninhibited cinema within the skull, as timbres of noctemplation mingle with designs of an improvisational nature. Disc two, Illusion, is a dark soundscape masterpiece! Though it is sculpted from similar sonic matter as Midnight Prayer, it seems to work better as a whole, a tightly wound spider's web of intoxicating sounds that incorporate more color, more darkness, a little dread, and much mystery. (Mystery is a key to the Chaos As Shelter sound, not darkness, not the forbidding or ominous, but mystery...) "Dream" is beaten with slippery wondrous implements, the disparate tones skirting about, a silver of strange buzzing inspiring an acoustic guitar to rise from the shadows. (This strange buzzing crops up throughout. I am reminded of the nefarious book, Neprononion, whose original title is Al Azif, which means "book of buzzings," or thereabouts... is there a deeper meaning to the landscapes that Vadim trespasses?) It's just a few precious seconds of beauty, before the clicking of subway train tracks leads one deeper into the hollow earth. Tinkling chiming open 'Illusion Pt. 1,' before more buzzing/humming arises, and brooding, heavy synths heave and swell, dispersing amidst clinks and scattered percussive tones that volley about. And the landscape breathes! And an unearthly horn blows... And a trace of something else (melody? -- or was that just the wind speaking...?)... Unknown animals, distinguished by the clattering of their bony exoskeletons, scamper over moist concrete during 'Place Of Warning.' The shadow of spiritual bonds of the gray walls, humming vocalizations (?! of indiscriminant allegiance. "The Time Of Sacrifice" groans despondently, murky reverberant sounds that shimmer with an unhealthy glimmer, a jaundiced plague of sound, forbidding and born of eternal filth. Powerfully expansive work, inventive and infernally aligned. One of 2001's best, no doubt! --JC Smith

Coil (Eng) "Music to Play in the Dark -- Volume 1 (2nd edition)" CD 2000 Chalice Records (via World Serpent Distribution)

I'm not sure exactly how I managed to review the second volume (of the two CD series) in last issue -- yet somehow it has happened! In quite true Coil form, 'Are You Shivering' launches the album with a bizarre and quirky programmed synth soundscape, with treated vocalisations sitting independent of the spoken story being told. Less bizarre musically, the title of the following track takes over this role. 'Red birds will fly out of the East and Destroy Paris in a Night'. The music is made of more programmed synth sounds, but these are quicker paced in tune and contain a trance-oriented vibe. Gradual metamorphosis of the basic structure occurs over its 12 minutes, but the track remains quick paced and focussed throughout, while becoming noisier and more galactic in scope. Stripping back to an experimental piece of sound glitches and treated vocals, 'Red Prince' enters its musical phase with a stunning almost free jazz vibe containing plodding metallic bass sound and meandering piano playing, throughout which vocals incessantly talk in a slow articulated drawl. 'Broccoli' has a hazy drug induced vibe surrounding it, made up partly from the bass drones and glitch sounds and partly from vocals being chanted, sung and spoken. 'Strange Birds' creates quite an impressive rhythm from nothing but low volume glitched static, and toys with modern sounding art-noise techniques (later the track spirals down into sparsely treated field recordings of birds and barking dogs). The final track, 'The Dreamer is Still Asleep', is a great trance-dub sounding piece of standard drum machine percussion, keyboard line layers and quite normal sounding sung vocals (which in itself is weird for Coil). Undoubtedly Coil in sound and scope, this is a second opportunity to obtain this once deleted mail order album.

Cold Electric Fire (USA) "Cold Electric Fire" CDR 2001 Sacred Sounds

After the Aluminium Noise CD introduced me to the DIY label Sacred Sounds, this second release has firmly solidified my intrigue in it and its affiliated artists. Likewise, even before I got to hear the actual CD, with the cover encompassing photoxposed card that is hand stitched together, certainly presents a personalised aura for the music held within. In terms of the

Death In June "all pigs must die" new CD/LP soon!

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V.A. - THE PACT I "flying in the face . . ." CD

Long overdue to be rereleased, here comes this very wanted classical compilation. Incl. Death in June, Strength Through Joy, Blood Axis, Fire & Ice, Arrkon, Eric Owens, Life Garden, Lux e tenebris, Not Breathing, Dogstar, Communications, Instagon, Necromantia, Schwartze Orden.

THE PACT



FLYING IN THE FACE . . .

BLOOD AXIS "the gospel of inhumanity" CD

The debut album of Blood Axis was sold out for many years now Tesco can present the rerelease of this milestone. Coming in the original digipak artwork. A blend mixture of military rhythms classical parts with traditional instruments and the strong voice of Michael Moynihan. (Storm 05)



NOVY SVET "cuori di petrolio" CD

2nd. album of this austrian project and fellow of Albin Julius of Der Blutharsch. (Hau Ruck 10)



THE PACT



. . . OF THE GODS

V.A. - THE PACT II ". . . of the gods!" CD

As if the first part wasn't good enough, the new installment comes with even better material, by: Ataraxia, Der Blutharsch, Fire & Ice, Forseti, In Gowan Ring, Camerata Mediolanese, Mee, Waldteufel, Ostara, Allerseelen, Shining Vril (John Murphy), Changes, Beastianity, Dave Lee.

KRAANG "uro (1981 - 1983)" LP

L. ed. 750, project of John Murphy with the following tracks: Agony, Neurasthenia, man is meat, Uro. All material on this album was originally performed and recorded under the name of KRAANG MUSIC between 1981 and 1983. (TESCO 043)



DERNIERE VOLONTE "le feu sacré" CD

After the succesful 7" on the same label Demiere Volonte is a new secret tip in the genre. Their minimal militaristic drums and sounds together with a french voice gives this band an unique appearance, thus their roots are not to deny . . . bands like Der Blutharsch, Blood Axis and NON might have influenced this band very much. (Hau Ruck 11)



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music itself, Cold Electric Fire presents sparse and darkly emotive soundscapes that fall somewhere between dark ambience and drone compositions. Working on a split format of sound, 'in passing' introduces the album with a piece rhythmic clatter and foreboding drones elements. Finishing all too quickly, an even shorter piece 'process one' is showcased (being only 1 minute and 11 seconds). Consisting of a distant forlorn sound, a faint emotive plucked guitar tune can be detected within the drone framework, yet despite its short length this track feels to be much longer. Encompassing a longer span, the 7 minute 'wild fire' is more forceful than the first two pieces consisting of drones, tape loops, found sounds and slowly bowed and manipulated cello. Quite dynamic, it quickly whips up a maelstrom of sound that whilst is a drone oriented piece, hints at classical melodies buried under numerous layers (whether or not actual classical samples are used is another question entirely – but the effect is nonetheless stunning). 'Cultivate your growl' is not as fierce as one might expect, and on one hand contains crackling layers akin to environmental recordings, that are set off against the sounds of an organ/theremin. With the darkly crafted tune shifting along at a catatonic pace, the actual tune is barely discernable, rather utilising the drawn out notes to evoke its enveloping aura. 'Process two' is another short piece, this time having a rather prominent fractured noise loops underscored with a faint tune, followed soon after by 'tailor', being a rolling mass of drone elements offset with an atmospheric yet depressive guitar tune. Building the track with manipulated percussion this piece surges out to the horizon effortlessly spanning every aural chasm along the way. 'Sightless' on the other hand takes a darker downward sweeping turn, with grinding metallic textures and a more urgent framework to the gloomy drones and swirling winds. Final track 'alchemist' is the longest piece at a touch over 11 minutes, opting for the middle ground of an atmospheric and emotive drone piece that incorporates elements that appear to be derived from environmental sources, along with unobtrusive percussive/rhythmic elements. With its longer length, this track quite appropriately meanders along unfettered with the final moments whisked off with swirling winds. I'm not at all sure how many copies this CDR is limited too, but it would not hurt to make inquiries with the label directly and seek out a copy for yourself to find another gem in the US underground.

Control (USA) "Praying to Bleed" 7" 2000 U.S.D Organisation

The 7" grey vinyl, apparently a specialty with this label, is contained in a standard gloss cardboard sleeve (adorned with brutal imagery presented with a keen design eye) and further housed in a screen printed canvas velcro slip case, meaning that there is little need for safety packaging when sending one of these via the post! From what I hear, Control are a relatively new power electronics project, that seem to have a number of items slated for imminent release (including one on Black Plague), and while I would have to say that there isn't anything particularly innovative or groundbreaking about what Control produce, it is very solid in focus and to a high standard all the same. The mid-paced title track works on approximately two levels: one being the filthy underside of constant base rumblings, the other the multifaceted squealing feedback that chaotically burst in and out of earshot. These sounds like there might be vocals somewhere in amongst it all, but these are severely mutilated so as to not resemble that of a human voice (much as the image of the corpse on the cover). Rather than boiling the blood, this track tends to place it simmering temperature just short of all hell breaking loose. 'Lust Killer' takes a more subversive approach with its slightly more machine rhythmic rumbling structure mixed with subdued noise elements that slowly multiply in thickness and intensity, rising to the surface then sinking again only to repeat the cycle (don't get me wrong here, this track is still damn harsh, just less so when compared to the first). Ultimately this track works much better due to its somewhat building structure, a quality that I find particularly enticing in power electronics projects. As this item is my first taste of both the label and group, both seem to be worthy elements of the growing US scene and are worth keeping an eye out for.

Control (USA) "Control" CD 2000 Black Plague

With what amounted to a minor eruption in controversy on the TUMORlist regarding what some considered to constitute extreme & violent misogynist imagery (as presented on the cover of this debut Control album), it threatened to overshadow the actual music presented. Well, arguments aside, this CD could have been packaged in a plain black case without losing any of the inherent intensity of the power electronics blitzkrieg. The blisteringly loud and insanely angry, 'pain' gets things moving with mid paced chaotic rumblings, high pitched fractal sonics and heavily treated/distorted wailing vocals. With the sound and focus quickly established, the remaining pieces surge forward in a similar manner. With the album sounding partly hectic & improvised whilst containing basic structure and direction, this assists in gaining and holding the listeners attention. 'Hematoma' manages a sweeping atmospheric tone to its static washes and wailing electronics, creating a constantly building sonic firestorm aesthetic. Despite some other tracks having some pretty nasty sounding titles (like 'stretcleanser', 'humiliation', and 'left to bleed') the vocals are never discernable in their content, firstly due to being ranted (or screamed) which are then heavily processed with distortion to create another layer to the chaos. 'The sickness' contains an underpinning rhythmic pulse, which is utilised as the foundation for the gradual building atmosphere, that despite being quite noisy, is relatively subdued when compared to earlier offerings. With a track title such as 'anger' it is easy to be deceived, given the actual focus is mid to slow paced fluctuating and cyclically constructed sonics, (rather than the anticipated attacking approach). Anyway, to say that Control represents a strong contender in the growing US power electronics scene would be an understatement, as this CD solidifies what all the fuss has been about with previous live performances and limited edition vinyl and CDR items. It should be noted that this release is also somewhat limited with only 500 copies having been pressed.

Converter (USA) "Blast Furnace" CD 2000 Ant-Zen

Over the last few of years, Scott Sturgis has established himself as one of the finest musicians within the realm of dark music, through his electro-industrial sonicscapes as Pain Station, and his rhythmic noise as Converter (I've yet to hear the d.b.s. material). The fact that the quality of each is of the utmost, well, that puts Scott in elite company, alongside the ultra-prolific Peter Andersson (Raison D'Etre, Straiym Terror, et cetera...). Adi Newton (Clock DVA, TAGC), and a few more choice individuals. Blast Furnace is consummate rhythmic noise, meticulously crafted, sculpted from metal and burnished in blood and sweat. The title track stutters amidst whiplash, metallic percussion, discharging multiple layers of static noochoet noise, shifting the focus throughout. The construction may sound familiar, but the results are anything but, as the locked in methodology is honed to a precision most excursions into rhythmic noise lack. Rubber gloves massage the womb of 'Be Broken' before metallic noise shatters into shards of noise that spray as shrapnel into the flesh of the ambience. An ambience also punctured by snippets of glossy, distorted synths. The gurgling miasma of rhythmic, throbbing noise that introduces 'Red Crystal' ventures off into the distance before a rippling rebort drags the noise back into focus, amidst injections of virulent metal and jackhammer pummeled blasts of ripping noise. Only electronics squeal amidst awkwardly stumbling rhythms, finally ending up in a valley of screams, moans and contorted vocalizations. Nothing is ever still, nothing follows a simple path; even amidst an abundance of loops, this music is in constant motion; multiple layers adding multiple perspectives. And the noise is NOISE, not some simple bastardization of the rhythms molars grind, mountains crumble, buildings implode, all with Scott's amiable assistance. (Even the calmer moments spit and flail, straining the sonic straightjacket.) There is so much to soak up here it is beyond listing. Just buy the damn disc! (Yes, that is most definitely a recommendation). - JC Smith

Coph Nia (Swe) "That Which Remains" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industry

When the bio states all of my potential companions (Sephioroth, Lustmord, Raison D'être and even snippets of Dead Can Dance) what am I supposed to do other than wholeheartedly agree? However one thing that sets this stellar debut apart from these other groups is the occultist/naturalistic side that steepes itself in Crowleyan mysticism (again it sounds like I am simply rehashing the album bio – that is, if it didn't also happen to be true). The gaping depths of CMI's traditional dark ambient sound are evoked from this CD's opening passages with lurking drones, muffled ritual clatter and haunting quasi-chanted vocals. The ritual/occult aspects are more obviously explored on 'Opus 77', with prominent male spoken vocals (reciting Crowley's concept of Will) along with fleeting segments of a lone female chant that could quite easily pass for Lisa Gerrard. While I could personally do without the prominent male vocals of this piece, they are not so much of an issue as to become a distracting (and therefore detracting) element. On the other hand, I have to say that some truly flesh-crawling screams, wails and wickedly demonic voices add an extremely unnerving air to the otherwise sweeping and classically tinged dark ambience of 'Doppelganger'. With further reference to vocals, the interplay of commanding male and fragile female vocals embellished with acoustic guitars ensures the introduction of complementary elements to the track 'Sanctus' – but rest assured, the deeply resounding dark ambience is never too far from the surface (and particularly wallowed in on the following piece 'Holy War pt. 2'). 'Our Lady of the Stars' throws the preceding offerings to the wind by embracing a stunning piece of gothic tinged neo-classical resplendent with soaring female vocals, organ tune and sparse yet booming percussion – but rather than dwelling on a description of its aura, this piece simply needs to be heard to be fully appreciated. The title track caps the album with a lengthy dark ambient slab of sound texture, where particular care is taken with the use of sparsely placed haunting choirs and slowing unnerving shifts of sound – again a track where full immersion is the only solution and the perfect way to usher the album unto oblivion. It seems that there was some sort of mini bidding war surrounding this artist with both CMI and World Serpent Distribution being the main players. Either way at least this album has now been released and can be fully appreciated. As always Kaptain Karmark has done a stunning job on the cover with images of cemetery statues in tones of black, silver, grey and purple.

Death in June (Eng)/ Fire-Ice (Eng) "We Said Destroy 7" ep 2000 Freiheit (via Tesco Distribution)

A most surprising track from Di6, 'We Said Destroy' contains a framework of industrial experimentation created via loose and echoed metallic rhythms that push the track forward, whilst being mixed together with an underscore of noise, spoken vocals, sampled voices and assorted drones (the track even finishes with a locked groove that gives off the aura of a bizarre carnival tune loop). While 'We Said Destroy' is completely different to what most would ever expect from Douglas, this is still a fantastically creative piece and shows there is much more the Di6 than just their familiar apocalyptic folk sound. (And unless you have been living under a rock for the past twelve months, you would know the concept of this track it aimed at the circumstances surrounding Di6's split with former label World Serpent). Fire + Ice on the other hand create a quiet folkie organ dirge on 'The Unquiet Grave' completed with the trademark mprose vocals of Ian Read. Mid track sweeping violins and female vocals really add flair to the sorrowful atmosphere. Packaging is also aesthetically pleasing, with blue foil stamped symbol and dragon presented on the cover.

Death in June (UK) "The World that Summer" CD 2000 NEROZ

This album, which was originally released as an LP way back in 1986, has now been re-released (for the first time on CD) in a beautifully and immaculately presented digipack of black embossed roses and red foil stamped writing. Held within the musical framework of this album there are classics like 'Torture by Roses' and 'Break the Black Ice' (both emotive apocalyptic folk odes that would become such a staple of later works) that have stood the test of time very favourably - if not being entirely timeless. On the other hand, the production sound of some other tracks point to the time when they were captured (such is the new wave up-tempo drum sound of 'Come Before Christ and Murder Love') likewise clearly marking the progression of Di6 over the years. The falsetto vocalisations of David Tibet (going under the alias Chrisi '777' for this album) on 'Love Murder' are simply bizarre, floating over a light melancholy yet waspy keyboard tune. 'Rule Again' is another new wave inspired song that over so slightly hints at martial themes in regard to the steady beat and lone trumpet, whilst lyrical focus points to Crowleyan derived inspiration. For the lengthy soundscape presented on 'Death of a Man' it is surprising in that this is quite similar to the quieter trench warfare soundings tracks that can be found on the last Turbunt Sturmwerk album 'Weltbrand' – yet amazingly these two comparative pieces were recorded 14 years apart, again highlighting the timeless aesthetic that Douglas and entourage have been able to evoke over the years. The final three tracks of the album come with 'Reprise 1', '2' and '3' which are actually alternate (vocal-less) versions of 'Rule Again', 'Break the Black Ice' and 'Blood Victory', bringing the total play time to nearly 70 minutes. As it seems like there is a plan to re-release many of the Di6 back catalogue with refurbished packaging, it is good news for individuals like me where there are annoying holes in my Di6 collection, especially in regard to the older items.

Death in June (UK) "Brown Book" CD 2000 NEROZ

Another classic and out of print Death in June album has finally been re-released on CD for the first time. The digipack is presented in light camouflage green with gold foil stamped *totenkopf* skull and title emblazoned on the front. Additionally the cover insert is printed on high gloss paper with photos and text from the original release - also including a photograph of a much younger Douglas Pearce. As the actual recording harks back to 1986-87 (similar to 'The World that Summer'), 'Brown Book' includes well-known songs intermixed with other tracks of soundscapes, speeches and general experimentation. The lineup for this recording includes Rose McDowall, David Tibet (credited as Tibet '93'), Ian Read (among others), and their individual contributions can be heard on various tracks throughout the album. The best known Di6 pieces here include 'Hail! The White Grain', 'Runes and Men' and 'To Drown a Rose', all of which follow the apocalyptic folk tangent and thus do not require further description, as anyone who even had a passing interest in the group will be aware of this style and sound. The more experimental numbers include 'Red Dog-Black Dog', which is built around hummed female vocals overlaid with a echoed male voice reciting a cryptic storey, and 'We are the Lust', which consists of heavy percussion, haunting sound textures and vocals (the track basically avoids any reliance on a main tune). 'Punishment Initiation' is a fantastic mixture of non-standard percussion, keyboard soundscapes and acoustics with the pained vocals of David Tibet really adding flair. The following piece is also the title track, consisting solely of a German chant that Douglas says is as controversial today as when it was first released (when first released the album was banned in Germany). The last real track, 'Burn Again', has an almost Spanish flamenco sound with its lightly plucked acoustic guitar, which is the lone musical element presented alongside David Tibet's vocals. As has become a staple of Death in June albums over the years, the last three tracks are 'mixed versions' or 'reprises' of other album tracks – here including 'Hail! the White Grain', 'To Drown a Rose' and 'Runes and Men'. Though not my all-time favourite Death in June album, this is still an essential item for my collection.

Death in June (UK) "but, what ends when the symbols shatter?" CD 2001 NER (Via Tesco Distribution)

Death in June (UK) "Rose Clouds of Holocaust" CD 2001 NER (Via Tesco Distribution)
These two albums see the scheduled re-release of the D16 back catalogue, and when they were released back in 1992 & 1995 respectively, were somewhat considered as brother and sister albums due to their strict adherence to the now benchmark apocalyptic folk sound. And with the current label advertisement proclaiming "the most important Death in June releases of the last decade", how could it have been more accurately put without sounding like an understatement or exaggeration? Originally presented in jewel cases, the re-released versions see the albums now housed in individual digi-packs that have used combinations of pressed embossing and foil stamping. Whilst the packaging pays homage to the original artwork, the digi-packs also include high gloss printed cover inserts that quite thrillingly incorporate additional images from the periods that the albums were recorded, creating rather majestic covers for each album. Forlorn and nostalgic, tragic and melancholic - the gamete of these emotions are encapsulated within an overriding framework of despair that spans both albums and the years that they were conceived. With the atmospheres of both albums being built on an acoustic guitar framework, they are further embellished with keyboard layers, backing vocals (male and female), trumpet, bass guitar, percussion, melodic etc. creating a continuity of simplicity yet an air of diversity. If we are then to look at individual tracks, it becomes apparent that there are simply no fillers on either disc. And it is quite astounding as to the number of D16 classics that these albums contain. From 'Death is the Martyr of Beauty', 'Little Black Angel', 'The Golden Wedding of Sorrow', 'Ku Ku Ku' and the title track off 'but, what ends when the symbols shatter?', through to 'God's Golden Spasm', 'Ormen-Filled Season', 'Symbols of the Sun', 'Luther's Army', '13 Years of Carrion' and likewise the title track off 'Rose Clouds of Holocaust' it highlights how magnificently strong these albums are when viewed either individually or as a representation of just how far Douglas has evolved D16's sound by the early to mid 1990's. Referencing alternate tracks on 'but, what ends...' 'Dædalus Rising' is particularly harrowing due to the urgency of the guest vocals presented David Tibet. The same can be (partly) said for 'This is Not Paradise' (again on 'but, what ends...') which sees David's spoken vocals delivered in both English and French, presented over a soundscape of cello and guitar in a coastal setting and mid paced strumming of the acoustic guitar. Mr. Tibet also guests on 'Rose Clouds...' where the presentation of his vocals on 'Jerusalem the Black' are rather subdued, but certainly contain his trademark style. With David providing one last collaboration, 'Life Books' closes 'Rose Clouds...' seeing the amalgam of both Douglas's and David's (spoken) vocals in a rather sparse soundscape (with David in the ending moments hissing "It's a dream, it's a dream... wake up, wake up"). Likewise including the immortally controversial line "The swirling sounds of swastikas, like rotor blades of thought, threshing the wheat out from the chaff" (spoken in deadpan voice by Douglas) to conclude the album, it is a perfect example of a type of lyric that on face value seems to articulate one idea, however after delving deeper into its ambiguous symbolism has a much more profound meaning. Basically I cannot speak highly enough of either of these albums, and if you were to only own one D16 CD in your collection it most certainly would be one of these. If Death in June remains as an enigma to some readers out there, either of these albums would be the absolutely perfect introduction.

Death in June (Eng) "All Pigs Must Die CD 2001 NER (via Tesco Distribution)

After the diversion from the 'classic' Death in June sound on the two previous albums "Take Care and Control" & "Operation Hummingbird" (mainly due to being recorded in collaboration with Albin Julius), the question being asked was: "what sound will the new Death in June album encompass?" - particularly as it became apparent that Albin would not be involved in these recordings. Well, to address this question the rather bluntly titled 'All Pigs Must Die' provides the official response and sees Douglas splitting the album into two halves and two sounds: encompassing half celebratory yet scornful apocalyptic folk nostalgia and half industrially harsh experimental noisescapes. Of the tracks with the more acoustic 'classic' D16 sound, these were recorded in collaboration with Andreas Ritter of German neo-deutsch folk project Forseti. Whilst on the flip side if the noisier experiments were recorded alone by Douglas and are similar in approach as that direction tackled on the 'We Said Destroy!' of last year (see above review) with this album actually including 'We Said Destroy II' & 'III'. Firstly making reference to the acoustic tracks, interestingly these don't contain any sort of martial percussion (which seems to be a popular element of current neo-folk acts), rather utilising trumpet and accordion as the main backing elements. Likewise with the absence of containing any other embellishing elements of keyboard melodies, backing vocals and strings it has created quite a stripped back and rather direct approach to Death in June apocalyptic folk sound. With title track commencing proceedings, the acoustic strains are offset with trumpet, accordion tune, folk whistle, with vocals being almost in the form of a charmed and repeated mantra (and certainly representing a solid beginning). Boyd Rice guests by providing a spoken word introduction to 'Tick Tock', which is a stunningly simple acoustic guitar waltz presented via cyclic strumming and semi-romantic accordion tune, whilst 'Disappear in Everyway' continues the acoustic/trumpet/accordion basis, reverting late in the piece to again use the repeated mantra of the album title. 'The Enemy Within (Strange Days)' with its vocal line "these are strange days for you and me and Germany... but we have honour and with that we'll win", sung over a rather epic and atmospheric acoustic guitar playing, I wonder if this (along with other lyrical hints) could in any way be interpreted as an ode to D16's new label Tesco Organisation? (... you decide...). Boyd Rice again provides spoken word introduction at the start of 'We Said Destroy II' prior to Douglas presenting yet another immaculate acoustic number, followed by the stunningly forlorn and depressive aura of 'flies have their house' being evoked via atmospheric trumpeting and meandering accordion tune (last minute of the track reverts to a mélange of voices, noises, song samples etc). Moving into the experimental side of the album, 'with bad blood' acts as a bridging number given it is an extremely noisy and spiteful reprisal of 'tick tock'. The basic structure of the former acoustic track seems to have been fed through distortion and manipulating equipment with the vocals re-recorded with unbridled anger, sitting alongside discordant piano tones and other demonic vocalisations. 'No Pay Day' takes on the aesthetic of the prior track yet is even more spiteful, lacking any sort of tune, rather opting to have the drawled scabrous vocals as the main focus. 'We Said Destroy III' is another partial reworked piece - here taking the framework of 'We Said Destroy II' and basically further destroying it with static feedback & echoes. 'Lord of the Sties' consisting of a spoken vocal piece, takes various German and English recited lyrics, amassing these into a loose framework of distortion and noise. Last and final track 'ride out' is a piece that does not entirely align itself with either of the experimental/ industrial framework or acoustic framework, as it is a rather fantastic piece of manipulated deep brass orchestral loops and indecipherable vocals, and is a great diversionary piece to conclude the new album offering. Overall the collaboration with Andreas Ritter on the first half has incorporated an increased neo-folk aura to the D16 sound (mainly due to the swaying accordion melodies), yet also I would have to say these tracks could be viewed as some of Douglas's strongest acoustic works yet as they have melded the traditional forlorn and reflective mood with a very sharp and very spiteful edge. Lastly with what appear to be sardonic references throughout the album, it seems that the split with World Serpent Distribution has a profound impact on Douglas to the point where it has been both the inspiration AND obsession for the new album. Whilst I initially found selected lyrics unnecessarily blunt (& therefore somewhat lacking the ambiguity or spirituality of earlier lyrical accomplishments), I can say that this album IS a fantastic release being yet another stunning triumph for D16.

Deison (Ita) "Dirty Blind Vortex" CD 2000 Crionic Mind

Deison is a name that I was familiar with, not so much with the actual music, but the their name until this recording. So after this introduction, the best overview I can give is Deison's style that it runs the gamut between sinister dark ambience and oppressive death industrial motifs. Grinding and obliquely tuneful, 'dream-morphology' is a dense looped soundscape with dialogue sample being derived from David Lynch's 'Eraserhead' which adds to the bleak yet slightly surrealistic edge. Radio frequencies and sporadic voices blend together with fractured sound layers on 'inside sources' to a bleak conclusion - as does 'novamalia' but rather opting for a bass soaked and muffled industrial sound with slight orchestral undercurrent. Whipping the atmosphere into an electric frenzy, 'lodge, hiny' is rather chaotic and somewhat improvised with loose groupings of loops and sharper textures that resemble electric wire distortion, whilst the sparse shimmering minimalism of 'silenzio' is sporadically punctured with bursts of machine looping clatter to add to the oppressive aura. With the writhing electronics and fog like atmospheres of 'Out of Spasm', it laboriously accrues intensity to become rather weighty by the time it has passed the five minute mark. 'Symptomatic Headache' creates the track with the least muffled production with sharp and twisted electronic pulses swirling at a higher sonic range. This higher, sharper sonic edge is again replicated on 'Terminal Suck Sick', however there are fewer aspects to the sound structure creating a broader electric oriented air. Diving headlong back into death industrial musings, 'Automatic Pain II' is quite fantastic with orchestral undercurrent that is massacred with full warfare samples (machinegun ablaze, bullets whizzing by close overhead). The final album track 'Dirty Intercourse' clocks in at over 12 minutes, being a broad soundscape of dense undercurrents with more improvised textures sounds, samples and malfunctioning machine idling noise laid over the top. In that it appears that Deison has collaborated on various tracks with the retina simulacris, government alpha and baal (among others) it has resulted in a more diverse sound palate between compositions whilst retain a specific genre focus. Having said that, the album is sonically dense and tonally bleak to create an aura of cruel musical intentions.

Dernière Volonté (Fra) "Le Feu Sacré" CD 2000 Hau Ruk (via Tesco Distribution)

Being signed to Albin Julius's (of Der Blutharsch infamy) label, you could expect this to have a stylistic slant towards martial/neo-classical, which is in fact right on the mark. This is another group that has arisen from seeming obscurity but has managed to produce an astonishingly solid debut album that warrants comparisons to the likes of Tribe of Cardia, WJLP and Der Blutharsch - in other words, top notch! In amongst a generally martial framework, selected songs seem to utilise sampled and looped classical snippets that enhance the forlorn atmosphere and likewise provide a timeless aesthetic. Other tracks, such as 'Nous maintenons notre histoire', contain spoken vocals sitting above a looped percussive base, deep resonating horns, sweeping strings and folkish flute tune. For yet another comparison, the slow and depressive aura of 'Der kinder nacht' seeps from the speakers much in a similar style to the brooding works of Raison d'être, with unnerving shifts of sounds and sparse hints of choir vocals and violin tunes. 'Le Coeur ombre' is more warlike in its clanging metallic percussion and pounding tympani, acting as an inspiring counterpart to the slow brooding tune enshrined in the violins and piano. This battle oriented vibe is again present on 'Der Zorn Gottes', but is here produced with constant rolling snares and quite massive epic horn melody (finally completed with sampled vocal phrase pertaining to the track's title). Both epic and forlorn, 'Marchefunèbre' contains slow snare drum work, marching alongside a brooding organ tune and understated piano accompaniment, whilst a flute tune floats slightly above. By far the folkiest track on offer is 'Les tambours', mainly due to the prominence of the flute and deeply sung male vocals, while the backing music sustains a quite rousing marching tune. On a different tangent the production sound of 'Mères de nos souffrances' holds quite an distant aura with its echoed and resonating piano tunes playing off against each other, which at just under three minutes is far too short (but I guess that this late in the album oblivion is slowly approaching, thus there is no point putting off the inevitable). While there might be multitudes of new groups popping up in the ever growing neo-folk/neo-classical genre, if they all produce albums of this calibre the scene can only be all the stronger for it.

Dissecting Table (Jap) "Memories" CD 2001 Triumvirate

The distinct industrial noise madness created by Ichiro Tsuji is again explored on the new Dissecting Table, where four tracks or 'memories' are presented, giving a total play time of around 40 minutes. From the opening segments it is apparent that whilst the same auras you would normally associate with this project are present, that the tracks have also taken on a (partial) format that is more akin to the construction of a full band than a sole individual. 'Memory I' with screaming noise feedback, fast paced metallic programmed percussion and buzz saw bass guitar all give the aura of listening to a hybrid of a grind band and noise project (the guttural distortion of the vocals additionally rendering them in a death metal guise). Retaining a free form flow, the track chops and changes between segments, yet it is when incorporating the structured parts, they appear to be the most composed that Ichiro has used. 'Memory II' commences with an ominous slow paced bass tune and programmed pounding beat, that apart from some metallic noise in the background interestingly could easily be passed off as a full band! Things continue in this fashion including the screeched vocals following a clear verse/chorus/verse format, whilst the middle segment contains electronic pulsating sounds highlighting a diversion from the metallic feedback (additionally with static blasts and a clanging church bell). Given the squelching feedback chaos of 'Memory III', it shifts through a variety of noise and percussive segments, and is far removed from the more structured 'band' sounding elements of the first two pieces and a nice diversionary offering. The final 'Memory' of the CD swings back to the fast repetitive percussion, obliterated bass tune and trademark vocals, before swinging off onto other tangents of semi-to-unstructured tangent, electronic weirdness, programmed dub etc. In that I find that most people have a love/hate relationship with Dissecting Table, for those who have succumb to Ichiro's chaos before, prepare for yet another all out onslaught!

Dodsdomd (Swe) "Everburning Evil Fire" 7" CD 2000 L.S.D. Organisation

Another L.S.D. Org. release presented in the dual packing of a pleasingly designed gloss cardboard slip sleeve, inside a screen printed canvas slip case. Although Dodsdomd were, like so many other projects, introduced on the 'Esthetics of Cruelty' DCD set, the two tracks on this transparent green vinyl (to match the full colour cover) are admittedly less raucous and chaotic as the sucker punching track included on the said compilation. Atmospherically noisy, the title track makes use of an unusual vocal treatment for the semi-whispered voice whilst mid-ranged, loosely looped rumbles intersperse further with sections of static derived noise and high pitched squeals acting as the combined 'musical' counter part. The very title of 'Fleshgrinder' gives an indication of what to expect, and the track itself furiously amasses into a froissured whole after a short build up. Machine gun-style loops and multi-layered high end noise reach such a point of intensity that it actually sounds as if the vinyl is faulty, and its incessant (but of course deliberate) crackling adds yet another roughly hewed loop in amongst the many. Despite all its hellish noise it does reach an unusual atmospheric tone that all too quickly fades away (I don't know how I would fare listening to a whole CD of something like this track, but it is good over the one side of a vinyl EP). Two sides, two tracks, and two interesting styles within Dodsdomd's power electronics/noise focus make this quite an interesting item.

Sally Doherty and the Sumacs (Eng) "Sleepy Memory" CD 2000 Tiger Records (via World Serpent Distribution)

Rather than constituting a new album, this is actually a re-release of Doherty's debut of 1998, but now with proper distribution via WSD (I assume that it may have originally been self-released). Quite a bit more song-oriented than Sally's "Empires of Death" soundtrack of 2000, her vocals take centre stage as varying instrumentation is used to embellish the 13 tracks. The vocals themselves are sung in a quite contemporary style, although hints of a Middle Eastern influence can also be detected. The songs also tend to hold a classical feel due to the instrumentation, which includes piano, flute, cello, violin, harp and classical guitar. 'Watching the Horses', which builds the musical framework on meandering piano and string accompaniment, is quite a dreamy song with Sally's vocals being both that of lead and backing, whilst the tablas percussion on 'Lake Linear' gives a clear nod to Middle Eastern inspiration, as do the vocals. The title track is clearly one of my favourites of the album, with this being attributed to the soaring vocals and piano/violin playing that leap into a number of more urgent segments. On 'Fast Approaching Silent', the piano's minor keys give a darker, moodier aura, and is assisted by the sparse backing vocals and accompanying flute tune, while my penchant for the mixture of strings and grand piano is satisfied on the slightly depressive track 'Voices', which is also really the last proper track of the album (if we do not include the 1 minute instrumental piece, 'Waiting'). Generally this album reminds me of the more fragile moments of The 3rd and the Mortal's works or even the recordings of ex 3rd vocalist Kar Rueslatten (when she was not trying to be a pop princess!). Basically this is a quite a contemporary and beautiful collection of emotive songs.

Droneament (Ger/The Infant Cycle (Can) "Klab (Phonorecord)" LP 2000 TheCeiling

Coming from a label I was not previously aware of, this features one artist I have heard (Droneament) and one I have not (I don't need to spell it out for you do I?). The first Droneament piece, 'ER-9 noise transmission.wav', is very much akin to what the group's moniker and track title would allude to, given it presents thick sonic waves of mid to low range register, with keyboard notes forming a slightly glitched sound. Interesting this track moves into regions I would have not expected from the group, utilising a programmed beat segment to push things along in a mid-paced, almost groovy sound. Here as much as the drones are not noisy or assaulting, neither are the beats, rather opting to be under stated, consisting of low toned bass kicks and light percussion. Mid way through, the drones slip off into the background upping the antics of the beats and slight driven noises and squeals yet still retaining the mid paced groove. Overall this track could particularly sit alongside any number of recent Ant-Zen releases of the dark electronica persuasion. Track 2 for Droneament (331/3 rpm acoustic transmission.wav) on the other hand is a surging mass of low and psycho-acoustic tunings - layer upon layer building into a bleak monolithic structure, where even the surrounding inky blackness appears to shimmer. For my mind-set track 1 is good but track 2 is where the real deal is at (I have always been a sucker for droning dark ambience). Flipping the clear vinyl over, The Infant Cycle has only 1 track to their side, a piece that starts out with a section of good old classic drones that morph into slightly evasive sound textures. Things continue on in such a guise until it unexpectedly breaks into a dub beat segment! Sharp and snappy percussion categorise the programming, yet ever present in the background are some semi-melodious keyboard drones. The format meanders along where the beats (and selected samples) are added and subtracted at a number of points - with this both jarring and assisting the flow (in a good way that is!). Again I would have to comment that this piece has quite a bit in common with cut up electronica style of the current Ant-Zen roster. For interest this release is more than simply a split LP as both projects have assisted in the construction of each other's tracks by providing the basic source sounds and assorted noise treatments, likewise with Droneament providing the handmade covers (grainy card with minimalist screen-printing and image attachment).

Exotoendo (Fra) "Push Kara" CD 2000 Athanor

Although 'Push Kara' is only the second album by this French project, it seems that the group has already split up. This is indeed very unfortunate news considering the quality of the ritualistic dark ambience that they have created here and on their previous CD (on Old Europa Café) a few years back. Although not mentioned in the cover liner notes, I have heard rumours that this CD was recorded in some sort of industrial vat, which partly explains the sparse resonance of the drone atmospheres. The Tibetan Buddhist derived inspiration also points to the ritualised sounds that seep gently into the mix at appropriate moments - perfectly creating ritualised dark ambience. Both waxy and arcanely deep drones meander forth from the speakers, and are later set amongst sparse notes (played on wind or string instruments) and light percussion (in the form of chimes and wood/metal implements) that mark the ritual aspects. Occasionally a charned vocal appears, sounding like a disembodied soul marking its mournful presence. As one track morphs into the next, some highlight more extroverted segments, whilst others work with a minimalist aesthetic, yet the slow evolving direction and flow of the album make discerning where one piece finishes and another starts quite a difficult task indeed. From this perspective it means that the CD is quite a good tool for meditative practise, or otherwise as apiece of music to which you can simply succumb without having a change of tracks break the feel and flow of the warm spiritual atmospheres being evoked. While Exotoendo may not have a huge name within the dark ambient field, this does not prevent me from recommending this highly.

Fennesz (Aut) "03 02 08 Live at Revolver, Melbourne" CD 2000 Touch

At only sixteen and a half minutes this live recording is a mere snippet of the real Christian Fennesz hammered out on his powerbook during a sweltering summer evening show. Static riddled and constantly fragmenting, this CD conjures up an oddly engulfing sound, with higher pitched tonal notes giving off a shifted modern type of sound. Within the contest of these sound textures, a sparse direction is found with the inter linking sample elements creating a rough drone type flow, constantly splintering off on new tangents. A middle segment gives the impression of someone scanning frequencies on a short wave radio - not that any voices are ever heard, mind you, but instead the barren soundwaves give off an electric hum. An extremely noisy and chaotic framework is used around the nine minute mark with a sampled tune being obliterated in the distorted static mix, amongst multitudes of other quite fierce noise textures. Things do calm down for the final part of journey as another sample tune and gentle static and glitched elements create a somewhat meditative state. Although the packaging is not worthy of a mention, if you have appreciated Christian Fennesz's experimental soundscapes before, this CD will not disappoint.

Fennesz (Aut/Rosy Parlans (NZ) "Live" 3" MCD 2000 Synaesthesia

This CD is quite stunning both musically and in the discreet miniaturised packaging that houses the 3" disc. The live recording showcased here was undertaken at an afternoon barbeque when members of the Megacrew were in Melbourne, Australia, in February 2000 as part of the 'What is Music?' festival. Although totally improvised between the two artists, it does not sound as such, working both perfectly in the drone and digital glitch sound styles. Two untitled tracks make up the 14 minutes of music, with both inhabiting a similar sound framework while holding their own distinctive aura. Track 1 contains calm static glitched loops at the foreground, with sparse drones crawling below that actually reveal a slow moving melody as they surge forward. Sparse and highly atmospheric, it creates an emotive air in which to revel and ultimately lose yourself (I first heard this when it was played on the radio as I drove home in the small hours from a Scanner performance, with the track complementing both the time and my mood perfectly). Track 2 offers a touch more rhythm and melody, with the slow format being fed through distortion effects to disguise the original sound sources. Here the glitches are still present but generally less dominant - but nevertheless a similarly stunning aura is evoked. Nothing else to add but that this is quality stuff indeed, and clearly shows the genius of artists who can create such sounds in an improvisational format.

Folkstorm (Swe) "Information Blitzkrieg" CD 2000 Old Europa Café

While this is the first Folkstorm CD off the ranks, you might also note that two other CDs were released in the same year (and are likewise reviewed below), yet despite the sudden rush of releases it appears that 'Information Blitzkrieg' dates back to 1999. All the same Mr Nordvarg has certainly been busy with this project to record three albums (four, if you include the ultra limited MP3 exclusive 'Culturecide Campaigns' CD) in between operations of his main project MZ.412 - and having dropped that project name it should be picking up a few ears. I will certainly admit that one of the charms of Folkstorm is its raw, almost crude styling, which ultimately alters from the more polished sounds of MZ.412. Likewise, by not being constrained by other members, Folkstorm appears to be a very direct channelling of Nordvarg's side as into these no frills aggressive power electronic movements. Apart from an unusual sampled opener (a 1940s-1950s stage song sampled in its entirety with no modifications except for an underlying analogue drone), the real meat comes with 'This is War' at track 2. Noise, loops, distortion, dialogue samples and then even more distortion for good measure - this should give you an idea of what to expect. Beginning with a drum sample that I am certain was originally from MZ.412's 'Nordik Battle Signs' album, 'Haus Betula' arrives as a sprawling mass of a throbbing electronic bass loops that is morphed ever so slightly over its length, whereas the harsh layers and blow-torch noise of 'Alle Sagen Ja' act as incinerating agents to samples of Third Reich speeches and military songs that have the misfortune of finding themselves inserted into the crushing mix of searing atmospheric noise. Low fi, mid-paced distortion box noise simmers just below the boiling point throughout 'M.H.S.M.' as the inserted dialogue samples are almost completely lost in the somewhat subdued grinding layers, while 'We Control You (1989)', with its fast and aggressive percussion, obliterated vocal smatterings and slight static, is a great but (at just under 2 minutes) disappointingly short track. Concluding the album with aggressive militant atmospheres - and even a hint of structural melody - 'Beendigung: Opus Rex' uses a lengthy format to construct the various layers of samples, dialogue, noise, programmed sounds to an engrossing result. Overall there is a definite comparison to be made to MZ.412, almost seeming like a stripped back and raw power electronics version of that project. Folkstorm is a more than capable project to provide you with an ample fix of culturecide.

Folkstorm (Swe) "Hurtmusic" CD 2000 Old Europa Café

Marching into battle, snare drum in martial alliance, Folkstorm welcomes sonic bloodshed via this scorching live presentation. Mixing samples, raw, nerve to the flame, feedbacksqueals, ultra-distorted loops of machinery noise and what sounds like mangled retching from within the throat of abused guitars (?)!, Folkstorm plow through fields of death with relentless revelry. The blanched in distortion vocals rage maniacally, the chaotic spels an integral part of the Folkstorm grinding crush of sludgy noise. Despite the fact that the recording has a very controlled atmosphere, one can almost sense the heat and feel the sweat and ear-shredding reverence that a show of this purely

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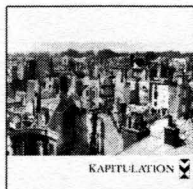
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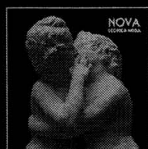
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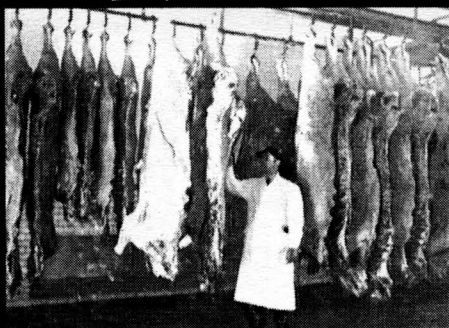


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assaulting nature must have inspired. Sheer, sonic, wrapped in distortion so thick it crackles like bacon on a skillet, like napalm on living flesh, brutality! What more can I say? (And, yes, this music can hurt!) -JC Smith

Folkstorm (Swe) "Victory or Death" CD 2000 Cold Spring

"Victory or Death" is the third Folkstorm release, yet like the debut, "Information Blitzkrieg", was also recorded back in 1999 and therefore predates the live recording "Hurtmål" captured in March 2000 (the live CD was incidentally released second in queue). Seething noise, slow bass pounds, repeated vocal phrase and high pitched squeals sees the stockpiling of sonic weaponry from the get go of 'Stolz', giving no ground as it trudges forward (later stamping on the noise accelerator and becoming all out chaotic). Fast analogue throbs characterise the main section of 'Feldgeschrei', and are pushed through further distortion and treatment throughout the track. By being simple and direct this piece nonetheless creates an additive result, particularly at loud volumes. Again analogue loops constitute the backbone of 'Harsh Discipline', and are combined noisy and very crunchy sonic textures while slow non-rhythmic beats and distorted vocals rise from the mix (later the track sounds as if it may collapse under the crushing weight). For a bit of education we are taught the principles of 'Propaganda' (on a track of the same title) as a slow pitch shifted voice discourses on the subject whilst high-pitched squeals and blistering looped noise torres incessantly into your skull. 'We are the Resistance' makes use of a stunning main section of deep tribal/industrial beats, again with sections of looping noise and sampled dialogue swirls to the backing - here too simplicity and directness win out. 'Funreal Force' (which is surely a typo) takes no prisoners as it builds on a base of muddled, bubbling textures, directly attacking with bursts of high-pitched noise. Hints of slow percussion appear but seem only to increase the aggression of noise to screaming intensity as the whole shrill atmosphere is amplified (does it get any better than this?). Taking an overall comparison of albums, I would have to say this is my favourite of the three as it appears to be slightly more worked through and also more militant and direct in atmosphere. To add to this the chaotic loops, static and noise have all been given a very pleasing production that additionally tends to accommodate a greater differentiation in sound between tracks.

Gae Bolg and the Church of Fand (Fra)/Omno Datum Optimum (Fra) split 12" EP 2000 Cynfeirdd

The first of a trilogy, this split instalment is limited to 333 copies. Up first is Gae Bolg, who are extremely traditional in their medieval/gothic song construction, with the male vocals sounding like a morose bard against a segment of guitar and wind instruments. Interestingly this slow tuneful segment is then juxtaposed against a section of absolutely pummelling tympani percussion as the track cuts back and forth between these segments for its duration. Basically, whilst being very traditional, it still remains an unusual blend of folk and martial neo-classical. The second track presents a much less musical structure, opting rather for a soundscape of drawn out flute notes, disembodied voices, and archaic sounds (that actually remind me quite a bit of the ritualistic sounds of Psychonaut), and overall leaving me slightly edgy and unnerved. The flip side of the EP by Omno Datum Optimum is not far removed from the first, and mixes gothic chanted male vocals and tympani percussion with a more full and brooding orchestral sound that is slightly more sweeping in its musical vision (distant strings, horns, snare drumming and subdued piano all add to the beautiful atmosphere). Omno Datum Optimum's second piece slowly rises as a deep cello movement with accompanying orchestral drones, chanted male vocals and deep percussion. By gradually increasing the intensity of each musical element, this track seems even more engulging than the first despite its more limited musical movement and direction. With full colour cover and inset this relatively new label is presenting some quite stellar releases that should at least pique your interest if neo-classical sounds are your thing.

The Galerkin Method (USA) "The Galerkin Method" 2000 MCDR self released

This must be one of the most bizarre releases I have been sent to review in this issue, given that The Galerkin Method meld contemporary song writing with everything from ethnic Indian sounds to European waltzes within their musical style. With the group centring around Stefany Anne, it would appear that she is responsible both writing the basis of the songs and vocal duties (that incidentally due to the infusion of an Indian influence are therefore quite comparable to the vocal style of Lisa Gerrard). The opener 'Whatwae', with its hammered dulcimer provides a certain ethnic slant and a distinctive individualistic sound for the project (despite the drumming taking a march like approach and other instruments such as guitar and flute acting as backing elements). The accordion waltz on track two 'Hale' is enhanced with violin, bass drums, guitar and Stefany's vocals and apart from holding a traditional sound, has a fleeting Mr Bungle type weirdness (however revealing nothing that I could directly put my finger on). The third track, 'Carmine B' delves into the alternate musical auras of the first two tracks (the European and the Indian), resulting in a heightened sense of a surrealist nightmare playing out in the crevices of the mind (and to think I considered some of Novy Svet's compositions to be out there!) Free form and ever so slightly folksy in feel, this perplexing frost' is the most straightforward song on presentation, yet the ethnic slant of the female vocals, along with accordion and violin provides the necessary continuity to preceding tracks: 'Longitude/Latitude' is reminiscent of the traditional eastern experimentations that the Tea Party delved into on their early releases - here the track using a moody dulcimer tune, layers of radio voices, violin and the ever present, urgent yet angelic female vocals. The darkest number is left to last via melding a brooding accordion tune (again) with the dulcimer and vocals of Stefany, prior to it picking up quite a bit of pace, galloping along with bass guitar and drums. Whilst certainly an interesting recording I am still left a little bemused as what to make of this, but the closest overall description I can think of is imagining the music that Lisa Gerrard would create whilst on a chemically induced outing... in other words strangely enticing!

General Magic (Aut) "Rechenkönig" CD 2000 Mego

Any CD that can sample Barney the Dinosaur on the opening track certainly shows a sense of humour that cuts against the grain of the often ever so serious academic 'art-noise' scene. Primarily of the static/glitch oriented sound for which the Mego label is so well known (which is not surprising since General Magic is comprised of the founders of Mego), the 26 tracks on this album generally range in length from a mere 30 seconds to just shy of five minutes. Random programmed/sampled tunes, percussive elements and diverse digital static all seem to have been fed through distortion-inducing computer programs to create off kilter and quite disorientating sonic textures. No tracks really stand out over the rest, yet each one explores its own little territory generally framed by the original source material utilised. Moreover, given the cut-up nature of the album, it can as easily be played through from start to finish or alternately via the random selection button, yet still finding that you arrive at the same result of listening to playfully complex and sometimes confusing sonics. I quite quickly run out of ideas of how to describe an album of this style, and would thus prefer to keep this review short and sweet. While this will certainly please aficionados of the Mego sound, this CD might not be the best introduction for newcomers to this label.

Gerome Nox (Fra) "Blood-Red Poppies" CD 2000 Moloko

Taking an overall concept centring on murder and serial killers, this solo artist has produced a CD which ranges from dense and disturbing death industrial soundscapes to more traditional industrial guitar chug riffs. Also used quite extensively to embellish the themes of the CD, numerous sampled dialogue pieces are used to occasionally chilling effect. More guitar

oriented pieces like 'On the Road' are not presented so much in, say, a Ministry vein, but are closer to how guitars were integrated into Slaughter Natives' "Sacrosanct Bleeds" CD. 'Mass Destruction' is a touch cheesy due to the up-tempo programmed beats and glock heavy guitar strumming, yet things do start to get interesting around the start of the following piece, 'Monologue Two' (as there are no guitars), which relies on subdued keyboard drones and scattered sounds to create a tense atmosphere further enhanced by the statements of a serial killer (recounting how he was forced to have oral sex with his mother). This vibe is carried through the title track, which at over 11 minutes is introduced with crime scene dialogue, and later encompasses massive furnace blasting sound textures, echoed metallic clatter, creeping footfalls and buzzing flies - these elements create a mental picture of a killer returning to the murder scene (and with tracks of this quality I wonder why the guitar tracks were ever included). 'Hell's Kitchen' does a somewhat reasonable job of mixing the darker soundscapes with slightly abstract guitars - yet again my comments on the guitar element remains. To finish the CD, 'A Tribute' features a male and female voice reeling off an exhaustive list of killers (some well known, others less so), and while this is an interesting idea that is set to backing sounds that are reminiscent of Megaptera, it unfortunately comes off as tedious and drawn out (considered that it spans 18 minutes). While the guitar pieces might not be bad at all, the darker soundscapes are much more distinctive and are really where the gems of this CD can be found. The cover imagery remains true to the title and is presented in a simply and clearly designed digipack.

Gothica (Ita) "Night Thoughts" CD 2000 Cruel Moon bc

Gothica's "Night Thoughts" is a beautifully lush and orchestral oriented album with moving compositions and sweeping operatic female vocals. From the opening strains of 'Stagione Oscura' the mood is set in full classical mode, with fleeting gothic oriented influences filtering through as the album progresses. Orately structured compositions add a certain depth to the album with combinations of both real and synthetic instrumentation providing a layered effect. As these sounds are aligned with prominent classically oriented female and restrained male vocals, it is not hard to draw parallels with the almost legendary Dead Can Dance. The tribalesque percussion and slow keyboard dirge of 'Spirits of the Dead' is particularly noteworthy, with the more oppressive themes of the track embodied in the subdued male vocal lead. Slightly baroque in styling, 'Proserpina' is a flowing mass of meandering vocals, violins and keyboards that would have been out of place on Dead Can Dance's classic 'In the Realm of a Dying Sun' (indeed, several other tracks bear this comparison). The late album track, 'The Pure Nymph', encapsulates a slow down-vibed orchestral movement that in my mind would have been better without the electric guitar solo nodding, yet this is not so prominent that it can't simply be ignored. For one of the most active and up-tempo pieces, 'Lost in Fleverie' strides forward with orchestral keys and strings - female vocals remaining a powerful central focal point. At mid song a commanding piano segment appears with auspicious result - fading the track to its conclusion. Of the 12 compositions, (which on average hover around the 3-4 minute mark), each explores its framework in moderate detail, created an album of maturity in relation to Gothica's orchestral gothic stance.

Haus Arafna (Ger) "für immer" 7" ep 2000 Galakthorrró

There are always certain groups that I know I should have checked out a long time ago (with Haus Arafna being one such project), but for whatever reason this did not happen until now. Knowing their cult status in the power/heavy electronics game, I must say that the vocals on these tracks were not entirely what I was expecting - but I have also been made aware that on previous tracks the vocals were far less tuneful. Anyway, packaging on this 7" is stunning with fold out card cover, printed vinyl sleeve and black wax and canvas ribbon to hold everything in place. Title track presenting a piece of queasy analogue electronic static and rough grinding rhythms, the male vocals are partly commanding/ partly monotone in presentation that are quite a diversion for the often screamed distorted style of the genre. 'Amputation cures' sees the vocals presented in a more urgent, slightly distorted guise, as loose noise loops and discordant tunes writhe in sparse groupings. Side B offers up 'no night to live' - a great piece of mid paced static, grinding textures and plenty of rough and heavy percussive sounds to compliment the sometimes subdued, sometimes commanding (but always clearly sung) vocals of Mr Arafna. The fourth and final piece 'rebels have no king' slows things down to a crawling pace, including the anaesthetised vocal delivery sitting over slow drawn out textures and occasional noise & static blasts that give off a very morbid atmosphere. Due to my tardiness in becoming acquainted with this project, I now have the annoying and arduous task of attempting to track down their prior releases. Recommended.

The Hollowing (USA) "Sepsis" CDR 2001 Live Bait Recording Foundation

With this project hailing from Brooklyn New York, it would seem that this bustling metropolis could be seen as a metaphor for the material that the Hollowing produce. Dense, chaotic and certainly crowded, the compositions clearly mark the experimental industrial noise style of the project. From the outset 'Selected' shows this focus using static, noise, numerous tuneful elements samples etc, that are massacred in a distortional grinder. Spitting forth-furious anger the track does not let up and forges quickly into the next piece 'Cloning Process'. With a bizarre (almost) rhythmic loop, it appears that an underlying sound might just be sampled from a computer car game! Vocal (or is it a sample?) of a whispered and indecipherable guise can just be detached as the partly structured, partly improvised piece continues. 'The Quickening' samples and again massacres a number of orchestral loops that are mixed in with the static blasts and growled/ distorted vocals and despite being quite chaotic the piece does manage to obtain a brooding and tense flow. 'Chapter 188' is built on distortional static, in amongst what might just be urban field recordings creates a rather freeform piece. The track is occasionally punctured with an aggressive vocal wail that is good for the first few times becomes a tad monotonous in that it is used throughout much of the 6-minute track. A more subdued atmosphere is evoked on 'Passage of Regret', seeping out of the speakers as a soundscape of quite metallic clatter and rather forlorn (somewhat) tuneful sounds (is it a horn or treated vocals or just a synth created texture?). Partly tribalesque in intention, the pounding beat of 'Blood on the Stones' is the skeleton on which voice samples, distortional sounds, looped vocals etc are draped to flesh out the repetitive cyclic piece. Static driven minimalism is the flavour for 'Exist', of which a vocal sample appears occasionally during the 13 minute journey with some of the sound textures being akin to the sounds within an underground train tunnel (and could well be just that). Last piece 'Heartless Resurgence' is a bit of a bizarre piece with ritualistic improvised percussion and vocal chants built up with bird samples and fleeting orchestral samples (I am not entirely sure of what to make of this piece as it seems to really sit apart from the other album tracks - even though they are rather diverse themselves). Overall I would have to say that the Hollowing definitely show some good ideas on this CDR, which will no doubt be honed even further on future recordings. Also with what is becoming rather a trademark of Live Bait releases, this comes housed in a DVD package. Lastly, with artwork designed by Peter Shelton, for those who know why this name is rather infamous on the TUMORlist, will get a kick out of knowing he is still lurking somewhere out there! (hint: and I quote from the album cover "Wanted by the FBI" - Peter Shelton).

House of Low Culture (USA) "Submarine Immersion Techniques Vol. 1" CD2000 Crowd Control Activities

Well, this album by House of Low Culture is certainly winning hands down as one of the most surprising recent CDs that I have been sent, mainly as its primary instrument is an electric

guitar (and thus less likely to be fit into Spectrum's sphere of interest). While this might be true of most guitar albums (read: rock, metal, etc), here the stylistic slant of strange looping riffs, vague melodies, layered distortion, feedback and samples ensures it has that certain resonance that aligns it so well with a darker experimental style. As for the emotional atmosphere, I wonder if it is a mere coincidence that track 2 is entitled 'Damnation of a Dead Man', and that segments of it remind me of the sparse yet depressive guitar musings that Neil Young provided as the soundtrack to Jim Jarmusch's similarly titled film 'Dead Man'. (A latter track 'C.F.T. (demo)' hammers this impression home more solidly, maintaining the same desolation evoked through the poetically told black and white film). On the other hand, 'Study for' in the Streamline, has little if anything in common with guitar generated tones, and alternately opts for samples of a dialling modem, random clatter and cut-up soundscapes. 'Another tragic one: hands sold by poachers', arrives somewhat at middle ground, mixing elements of a depressive guitar tune and static-riddled backing that verges on a subdued power electronics/white noise type of sound. Track 8, 'Submarine Immersion Techniques III', it does exactly that by sinking into a crushing mass of mostly non-musical distortion and slow noise induced riffs. The final track, 'If Approaches', is almost entirely a death ambient piece of crushing bass and wavering tones, rising and falling in intensity throughout. While a slight deviation from what CCA have previously released (but then again they have released items ranging from tribal ambient to power electronics), this is a fabulous album that has been brought to my attention one of a number of new groups working in with experimental guitar sounds.

Ikon (Aus) "The Shallow Sea" CDS 2000 Nile

Acting as a faster to the upcoming album 'On the Edge of Forever' (although credited here as a 'single version'), the title track is a magnificent slab of partially acoustic up-tempo gothic rock. A bass guitar melodically (and prominently) plods alongside the constant kit drumming, while the acoustic guitar strums the main tune - the accompanying electric guitar acts as a soaring and embellishing element rather than as the main focus. A couple of down-vibed interludes only add to the wide screen vision, with the accompanying vocals ranging from understated singing to partial whispers. The second track, 'As I Recall', takes a much more prominent programmed focus in the percussive department, yet still remains quite up-tempo as both keyboards and a drawn-out electric guitar hold the tune. The middle ground of this five track release consists of a demo version of 'Closing In', while the last two tracks encompass two live songs recorded at the May 2000 Death in June/Ink show (reviewed last issue). As mentioned in that review, an up-tempo version of D16's 'Fall Apart' was showcased, with the stunning results captured here. Not simply being a cover, this is Ikon taking the essence of the said track and shaping it to be very much true to their sound. Encompassing a sincere attitude and lacking that certain pretentiousness present in many gothic groups, I have found this to be a very pleasing introduction to the works of Ikon, despite their having been around MUCH longer than Spectrum.

Inade (Ger) "Alderbaran" CD 2001 Cold Spring

No, no... before you flip out this is not a new Inade release, rather a repressing of the now much sought after first Inade CD (and at the time of writing the ONLY true full length Inade CD if you do not count the Burning Flesh tape re-release). Birthed originally in a double fold out digipack cover, this version is housed in a standard jewel case & with minor alterations to the font and print colour, but with the cover still doing justice to the mystical & cosmic radiance of the original artwork. Whilst I am generally loathed to undertake full in depth reviews of re-releases (unless they have changed drastically in some way or I didn't hear them first time around) I would rather use this as an announcement to people who are yet to obtain an item. Anyway to keep it brief I can't recommend this highly enough, thus if I am are going to go all the way in compliments I may as well do this properly! Now to have it said, given the milestone that Lustmord's 'Heresy' represented in dark ambient way back when. This album has taken the basis of that sound to create just as much of a landmark release in the esoteric heavy electronics sound (how is that for big words?...). Yes, you better believe me when I say that this is that good!). If you missed this first time round, be warned! I'm sure the re-release won't be hanging around long and should have you salivating for the highly anticipated second album 'The Cracking of the Anonymous'.

Institut (Swe) "A Great Day To Get Even" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industry

Sweden's Institut hail from the punishing, repetitive percussion and tortured machinery loops school of rhythmic noise, heavier on the noise as it is dispersed in greasy peals of harrowing feedback and caustic screech. The rippling mayhem of 'Landing Target' flutters like the tail of an irritated rattlesnake, like an agitated helicopter prowling the skyways for victims to slaughter with the swish of its blade. 'On The Highway Picking Up Speed' adds some clipped and flayed dynamics to the mix, as bursts of grind and shriek noise perforate the metallic flesh of the white noise asphalt; the result is a wild ride along steaming byways littered with metallic carcasses and bleached bones. The piston pummel rhythm of 'Black On Red', sounding like the looped splat of brains on concrete, pounds down an iron door, unleashing some exceedingly harsh vocals. The rhythm is almost mesmerizing, monotonously insistent. Twelve tracks in all, a quality punch and squeal affair. —JC Smith

IRM (Swe) "Oedipus Dethroned" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industry

Oedipus Dethroned is a staunch declaration of hatred ignited by the frailties of self, of being human, the weakness of the flesh, and the inherent misconception (or slippery truth) that all men are created in God's image. What god is image without substance, if it is nothing more than borrowed; what god is image when it is wrapped around a scarred soul and made to suffer in ways that God would never have conceived (unless He is a malevolent being...). The blistering screech, stomp and blood pumping, grind and squeal power electronics presented here is evidence of the torment of existence. The thematic thread sutured into the sonic body is self-revelation through self-mutilation, corruption, defilement... only achieving stasis through death. (Death of self = Death of God, the ultimate 'father.'). A scalpel plunges into virgin flesh during 'The Celebration Of The Untouched Skin,' the ultra-processed vocals spewing, "This is beauty," as it seeks release through the 'ultimate abortion.' All of this amidst sludgy electronics caked in choral samples, the lie initiated via the inclusion of faux pas spiritual elements among the increasingly riotous noise. "The Disease" invites infection as feedback injects the heaving clamor and pummel of brutal cataclysmic noise to 'My utopia the plague' (conveyed through a seemingly bloodied larynx). "The Stage-Surgeon" is Christ, the shaper of clay (man), a deceptive manipulation, the only safety achieved in the grips of Death: 'Death and God: the Total Annihilation.' The thematic focus throughout this amazing disc is honed to crystal clarity, amidst the rolling sonic turbulence. Oedipus Dethroned is one of the most provocative presentations within the genre of power electronics that I have yet to hear. Mandatory is an understatement! —JC Smith

Isomer (Aus) "the lotus eaters" MC 2001 self released

For regular readers, some might remember a review of a tape by David Tonkin featured in the last issue. Well David returns with this tape now under the Isomer banner to explore some further eclectic ambient/industrial experimentalities. With an introductory sample philosophising on moral decadence and the media, 'baby fuck me please' is a concoction of angry muffled death industrial textures that drop to the lower end of the sound spectrum. Voices are barely detectable in all the chaos as the layers are pushed to the extreme with

cyclone like intensity. Followed by 'dispossessed', this track builds on a lo-fi subdued rumbling drone, overlaying scattered fractured electronic snippets of sound as it meanders along. 'Package deal option' uses a more direct approach with a ridged and echoed percussive structure that begs a comparison to rhythmic industrial sound of the like of Morgenstern. However with a partly improvised personality it is not unlike having your neurons misfiring during an alcohol induced hangover. I would have to say that the title track is clearly the best piece on here with its sturdy death ambient approach. With a lo-fi drone constituting the backbone, a repeating structure of sparse clatter is overlaid along with a bizarre repeated sample (a woman stating coldly 'don't steal... you'll feel so much better'). Further melding in sparse yet foreboding keyboards and sampled choir, it build an intense atmosphere akin to Megaptera, and highlights how good this project is when all the elements hit their mark. Diving headlong into increasing intense territories the lengthy track is an attention grabber for its entirety. On the other hand 'Compressed formula' forges a quirky experimental sound constructed with an assortment of blips, pulses and bass heavy elements, that sits somewhere between a digital and industrial aesthetic in its partly structured, partly scattered construction. Final track 'call to arms' gives the rhythmic industrial sound another bash with its fast paced pounding arrangement. Once the initial structure is forged, it is gradually morphed and tweaked whilst constantly introducing new elements and in the process amplifying the intensity. Maybe this tape is not as clearly focused as the debut tape, however demonstrates some positive ideas and some clear highlights, thus should be viewed in context of a project forging its own niche. Contact isomer@start.com.au if interested.

Karceral Flesh (Fra) "Bienvenue" 10" EP 2000 Athanor

After being introduced to the group via their rather anthemic organ tune/martial percussive track on the VAWS 'Thorak' compilation, this vinyl has come as a slight surprise mainly due to its inclusion of tracks with a more rhythmic percussive rather than specifically martial orientation. Also, as there was some indication that Les Joyaux de La Princesse was partially involved in this release (though the cover gives no specific details), if anything I expected that it might have been on the opening track, 'Tout Est Nuit', with its slow synthetic yet slightly orchestral tones. An extremely short piece of deep storm cloud drones, 'L'Attente' quickly moves into the third track 'Stuka Dance' which, after beginning quite atmospherically with air-raid like drones and subdued static, evolves into a mid-paced up-tempo forceful percussive track. The first track of Side 2 is 'Agitation', another mid-paced rhythmic piece that is actually quite complex - its clanging metallic layers result in a catchy composition. 'Defile 2' hints at the orchestral/martial grandeur of Karceral Flesh's contribution to the Thorak compilation ('Defile 1') and is the best track here with massive satiate pounding percussion and brass and organ oriented tune. The final track, 'Souvenir', is a deeply muffled soundscape of shifting tones and barely discernable orchestral sounds that rise in prominence (proportionate to the time elapsed) only to surge into a complete firestorm of orchestral industrial noise (this piece easily claims second place to the best track). Grey vinyl and immaculately presented slip cover presents the visual side of a release that, while slightly different to what I was expecting, is by no means a disappointment.

Karnos (Por) "Deatharch Crann" CD 2000 Cynfeirdd

Alongside Lady Morphia, Karnos' debut CD is one of the best discoveries within the apocalyptic folk scene. And likewise with Cynfeirdd, they are a relatively new label that have consistently come up with quality releases, making it worth your while to keep a keen eye on them - particularly if neo-folk/neo-classical works are of interest to you. As for Karnos, they hail from Portugal and have a very distinctive, shimmering & warm enveloping aura to their folk drive soundscapes and acoustic odes. Instrumentation of the three member group ranges from electric & acoustic guitars, mandolin, flute, bagpipes, viola and synthesizers (to name but a few), expertly interwoven irrespective if the track is ambient in nature or traditionally song styled. 'As life is carved on wood and blood' builds a song framework of acoustic guitar, flute and viola that transports the listener's mind far from the mundane aspects of life to revel in visions of European mysticism. 'The streams of longing, solitude and the one-eyed death' takes on the more meandering soundscape style, highlighting the differentiating elements of song and soundscape collated on this album. Also, the vocal range used, from the groups native tongue through to English - (even when the latter is used), it is the particularly heavy accent, builds another distinctive sound into the compositions. On the fifth track (the acoustic driven 'A tree of union under the lost divided, lost spirits') I can not even begin to fathom up words to describe its haunting depressive beauty - other than having such a profound effect, making you feel as if your own soul is collapsing. Late album track 'Loki, Wizard of Lies' is a darkly aggressive looped composition with a vocal mantra repeating the title that gradually leads into another fantastic ode, 'Land of Slags' which mixes drawn out classical synth lines & martial snare percussion with resonating acoustic rifting. The final track 'In the pale, pale night' starts as a dark looping collage evolves into a depressive guitar driven tune - hence being a track that perfectly covers the two aspects of Karnos' sound. As for the cover, it is presented as a gatefold card sleeve with an additional booklet, superbly presents the visuals for the music on offer. In passing I simply cannot recommend this album highly enough.

Kettle (Aus) "With my left eye closed" 3" CDR 2000 label: KETTLE

Packaged between two tin plates, the concept of this CD revolves around the aural interpretation of a medical condition suffered in the right eye of the artist (i.e., closing the good left eye to perceive the world through the sight of the deteriorating right eye). With three tracks and just short of 20 minutes, the compositions blend one into the next as fractal masses of clinical static and electronic induced noises and drones. Mostly in the mid-ranged tonal velocity, things are rough around the edges, but the sounds never reach a high-end and pain inducing pitch. Sections of sounds and noise align themselves and bridge one into the next, holding an aesthetic of new sound art/minimalist noise experimentation with a convincing dark and slightly menacing edge. I guess this material has a comparison that could definitely be made to the new direction of Hazard, which only further highlights the quality of this. The format of the label releasing 3" CDRs is also a way to present short snippets of the works of Australian sound artists in intriguing packaging.

KK Null (Jap/ Moz (USA) "a split release" CD 2000 Crionic Mind

Having witnessed a couple of KK Null performances in previous years, I was expecting massive doses of (post) guitar manipulated distortion, yet surprisingly Mr. Null has taken a whole new approach to his experimental noise using samplers/sequencers to fuse a technoid aspect within his wall of noise approach. Whilst the experimental noise distortion elements are still clearly the main focus on the first track 'KXYL', it is the sampler/sequencer that weaves a clear rhythm and structure into the composition - a sizzling molten mass of mid level distortion merged with cathartic rhythmic elements creating a modern yet tribal aspect to its repetitive aura. With a title only a Japanese artist could come up with, 'Client walking in a tunnel of libido' initiates a mid paced beat sequences that is progressively tweaked into a slow churning whirlpool of static and noise, while the disorientating fast paced speaker fading and distortion attack of 'Psychopathic Surfing' is more flowing freeform experimentation. Leading onwards 'Hypocrite' contains an almost psychodelic (yet tribsesque) percussive sound (which is great I might add). The final KK Null piece 'quid pro quo' is a short seizure inducing attack on the senses! Certainly different to what KK Null is typically known for, it is however great to see further progression and experimentation from such a well renowned noise artist. In clear opposition to KK Null, MOZ opts for ultra dense and bleak soundscapes of death

ambient intension – the first track 'release value' has a low bass oriented rumble that is shattered with a stunning (yet fleeting used) static pulse, being the perfect aural interpretation of the title. 'Wage Slave' ups the ante a notch or two, building structure with aggressive guttural loops, mid to high end electronic feedback and gruesomely distorted vocals. Barren glacial electronics characterise 'degradation of divinity' – ever ebbing and flowing with bleak tension (this is fantastic yet far too short at under four minutes). 'Imperialism' on the other hand is an attacking mass of structured pulse, furnace blasting distortion and firestorm textures, being clearly inspired by the negative connotations of its name. One can again visualise the aura of a track embodying the title 'Funeral Procession', with its solemn keyboard melody and the slow gait of the programmed structure. Final track for both MOZ and the CD is 'Asylum'. A fantastically echoed resonance via metallic scrapings, slow chime, gong and sparse structure, all blended into a cavernous and unnerving result (feelingly bringing to mind selected works of Robert Rich). For anyone unaware Crionic Mind, they are really starting to solidify their presence as a premier underground label, with such a split release only hammering home such a perception.

Kraang (Aus/Eng) "URO: 1981-83" LP 2000 Tesco Organisation

This Kraang LP showcases some selected experimental noise compositions that soloist John Murphy recorded during the early 80's under the original name Kraang Music. To offer a personal perspective, these recordings are nearly 20 years old, which means that I was only 5 when these noise experimentations were first evoked! Anyway, by virtue of the period during which these pieces were recorded, the LP inevitably encompasses an old school style; however, given the amount of old school industrial noise and power electronics currently being produced, there is certainly a clear niche for such an album in the current market, despite its status as a historic document. With 4 lengthy compositions being showcased (2 per LP side) and whilst encompassing improvised industrial noise, clear direction and flow within the pieces are specifically evident. Frequenting neither piercing high end static or guttural bass tones, the noise squeals, looped feedback and chaotic clatter are all framed in a mid-ranged pace and tonal velocity. Segments of noise are approached and established before being manipulated, tweaked and basically destroyed to form the basis of the next segment that in turn suffers a similar fate. Fleeting voices are detected on 'Man is Meat', yet appear to be sampled in that they are not generally discernable. In its entirety, the LP generally flows together as one mass of experimental noise despite being divided into 4 sections of 'tracks' – having said that, the final track 'URO' is the most atmospheric one on offer, sliding along with muffled hurricane intensity alongside metallic scrapings and random textured noise – very grand indeed!). As for the cover, this is particularly stunning due to the reflective card stock used, all in all creating a very 'Tesco' look to the LP's presentation. While John Murphy is known for his workings with Lustmord during the early days through to Death in June more recently (and plenty more in between), it would appear that he has never diverted from some sort of involvement in the postindustrial underground. This LP really serves as a celebratory document to this dedication, to be likewise viewed in conjunction with his new projects, Knifecladder and Shining Vril, both of which are currently raising their profile.

Lady Morphia (Eng) "Recitals to Renewal" CD 2000 Surg (via Tesco Distribution)

Lady Morphia would seem to be a relative new comer to the English neo-classical/apocalyptic folk scene, with this being the first official album after a few self-released tapes and CD's. Taking cues from the likes of Death in June & Der Blutharsch, Lady Morphia have come up with a fantastically strong album that whilst reflects the generates it's own distinctive aura. 'Prologue: Hope and Despair' is the first track that utilises a sampled Polish knighthood song, prior to the introduction of slow martial beats and neo-classical orchestrations that mark the second half of the track. 'Sun Spirits' is a track of pure joy with an acoustic driven tune, classical backings, church bells, sporadic tympani/share drumming and clean sung vocals of defiant quality. The xylophone accompaniment to the acoustic strains of 'Heimat' are nothing short of magic – as are the clarinet and oboe elements that follow the main guitar and vocal tune. Some fantastic dark ambient atmospheres can be found on 'The Mirror of Shame', containing shimmering textures, disembodied vocals, chimes, water samples (and the like), expertly crafted into a deep atmospheric piece. 'Wings of Survival' is an urgent acoustic guitar ode, uses sparing elements of piano, tympani and assorted percussion to build its aura, whilst the following track 'Beauty Decay' interestingly contains a heavy eastern influence over the slow tune/soundscape. Another celebratory acoustic ode is found in 'Brothers', expertly mixing oboe and acoustic guitars with heavy and stately percussion, that overall holds an amazingly distant & forlorn atmosphere. 'Palingenesis' is one more dark ambient piece – offering a ticking clock, distant share drumming and whispered vocals (among other elements), whilst Ernst Jünger recites from one of his writing. And it is this element of Ernst Jünger alone that solidifies one of the heavy influences present on this album, to the point where it has been specifically dedicated to his memory. The slower and more reflective 'Parhelia at the Precipice', is yet another magical acoustic driven track that leads the album towards the final track 'Epilogue: Spero-de-spero' – a beautiful yet forlorn piano melody sweeping the album into morose oblivion. For Lady Morphia's first widely available release, they have certainly produced an album of stunning diversity, with all elements reflecting a heavy European flavour. Filling mere millimetres short of being an instant classic, this is as close as one could come and only speaks leagues of what to expect from Lady Morphia in future.

LAW (USA) "Our Life Through Your Death" CD 2000 Triumvirate

Our Life Through Your Death is an exhilarating, sometimes jarring, always intense exhibition of embryonic salvos (it was constructed in 1996) launched by one of the most fascinating and original bands within the realm of experimental/noise/ambient music (it touches every base, and more), LAW. As orchestrated by Triumvirate co-founder, Mitchell Altum, LAW weld together a compelling blend of uncommon electronics, harsh, machinery infused ideals, and disjointed rhythmic deployments, creating a foundation of immense sonic strength upon which the human element (guitar, bass, sparse vocals) brings it all to life. The music is raw and unfettered, cluttered, but with imaginative focus, less refined than later material, not as hard-wired, more hot-wired and coarse, like being caressed by talons of steel wool. The highlights



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are abundant and ever shifting, each listen bringing different revelations, but here are a few that continually stand out. The hornet's stinging whine that pierces multiple layers of shackled, murky noise during 'Vision Flashes To Red', finally sinking into a miasma of unnerving ambience upon which a garbled voice declares, "Our life through your death," appropriately setting the disc in motion. Wading through the wastelands of lost souls, an ambience laud with torment and haunting despair resides at the core of 'Abrasion,' an ambience annihilated by the corrosive, caustic howl of guitar and whiplash reverberation that flutters in spasmodic retaliation. It is a resurrection by chaos, the lost souls battered into oblivion by Pandemonium's gnarled fists. Brilliant! The mouth of sinister tongues that licks the marrow from within the broken bones of 'Unseen Existence,' an ambience of constantly shifting turbulence; tongues like juggled razors, scraping and fluttering, procuring sustenance... (and a warped, backwards looped classical passage...?). The brittle acoustic guitar intro to 'Betrayal Of The Flesh,' that ends up being devoured by soldier stomping percussion and choppy, fragmented guitar, while an undercurrent of molten tides recedes, leaving a blasted terrain upon which Mitchell drenches the listener in roaring feedback so visceral, it threatens to draw blood. The fidgety cymbals and drums of '100 Degrees,' plowing a path for a yawning guitar that ferociously prowls around the mechanized drive inherent to this track, a caustic, harrowing evisceration of controlled, growling noise. There is much more here, enthralling and strange and unlike anything else you have ever heard. Period! —JC Smith (A slightly different version of this review appeared in Outburn. www.outburn.com)

Les Joyaux de la Princesse (Fra) "Croix de Bois / Croix de Feu" 10" EP Les Joyaux de la Princesse

How could one approach writing a review of this release without touching on the packaging first? This 10" EP was sold in 900 copies by subscription only, and upon payment one received an official subscription ticket. Not all that stunning, you say? But when considering that this subscription ticket it is packaged in a grey card A2 sized folder and overwrap ribbon (in the colours of the French flag, of course) that holds in place a 2-track clear flexi-disc vinyl, the special aura of this release begins to be unfold. Regarding the official release itself, the red vinyl is housed in an oversized 10"x14" booklet cover (also in blue, white, and red, with gold twine along the spine), with numerous pages of French text and 1920's images relating to the theme of the release (which evidently relates to French nationalism and a mystic organisation operating around the time). While there might be constant argument for and against such high priced limited edition releases, when the finished product comes together as this one does, I am happy to fork over a bit more money for such special packaging. And what of the music? The title track side of the 10" commences with deep orchestral keyboard layered drones that gradually build and overlap along with distant sweeping choir voices that add a human element. The intensity is later increased via a diversion away from the opening segment with more prominent orchestral melody mixed with warlike bombing backing noise. Commencing the second discernable track (still on side 1), are sampled French speeches set against a deeper orchestral melody (although snare percussion can also be detected). A sampled and partly looped music hall song is used to mark the commencement of the third piece, and although this is again built around French speech samples and orchestral keyboards, it creates a much more doom-laden and apocalyptic atmosphere. With the first side really driving home an overall morose and forlorn orchestral atmosphere, the second side of the 10" comes as a partial surprise given the use of quite fierce static to fire blast the keyboards and yet again more era speech and crowd samples (concluding with another music hall song that is sampled in its entirety, without alteration). The following segments again fall back to the presentation of the classic LJDLP sound (forlorn and distant sounding orchestral soundscapes); however, with the looped samples of brass instrumentation it really lifts the atmosphere to the next level. The flexi-disc contains two short pieces – one being a slow evolving keyboard-based tune that is more classical than orchestral, the other more of a noisecape with radio voices, warlike atmospheres and distant drones. Both are nice bookend pieces to the main 10". Overall this might not be as epic as the previous "Exposition Internationale: Paris 1937" 7" (but it still comes quite close), it is more along the lines of the "Aux Petits Enfants de France" CD. Given that this is most likely already sold out, I shudder to think what price this will fetch on resale. A word of advice – be diligent in ordering such items up front to avoid paying through the nose for it later from unscrupulous collectors.



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LS-TTL (USA) "el-es-tee-tee-el" CD 2000 Dragon Flight Recordings

The first release by Brian Coffee's LS-TTL is a fascinating, slow moving descent into the mechanized Hell of a splintered mind (the booklet claims this is "The sound/murk for the untitled film of the mind"), soundscapes of suffocating darkness that subtly morph from forlorn and foreboding, to agitated and tortured. Where lots of dark soundscapes are moist, signifying a conviction to something living, or at least once alive, LS-TTL is very dry (not cold, but dry...), devoid of human allegiance... and yet, human elements continually peek through. The songs stretch, peeling off layers of the flaking metallic epidermis from the body of sounds, sounds emanating from a desolate outpost, the machinery whine and engine clatter billing in solitude, awaiting... what? (Or is that the mind cracking?) Metallic insects scramble about, antennae twitching in static communication, above a somber synth drone during the opening "drktual." During the next few tracks, the LS-TTL manifest is aligned, amidst subtle, yet distinctive, tonal shifts and looped choppy noises, creating a foundation of unease. The atmosphere of "erai" is blanketed in harsh winds that erode any connection between humanity and existence, while nauseating undertones (the impatient struggle for something more, a sense of incapacitation is present) are tattooed with grinding gears and almost human screams... almost... (Listen to how the human element persists, even out here in the furthest reaches of desolation.) Humans (?) moan like cows being led to the slaughterhouse during "tro," amidst murmuring synths and clattering noises (weary gears grinding forth, a conveyor belt procession) and much scattered blood, all bound together by a thread of desperation. Eerie and disorienting. Low rumbling bass tones (like dead bodies being dragged about) carve rituals into the ebony hide of "orc," before radiant tones scour the senses as "calmb" commences. Through echoed tides of wind swept chaos, noisier syringes of noises are injected into the flesh, a climax of hallucinatory disorientation; everything sounds like it would send a Geiger counter into the red, adorned in radiation and corrosive reverbs. All simmers uncomfortably on "amesch," agitation at bay, crackling and swirling but, somehow, contained. (And then there is the untitled bonus track, which veers into alien territory; the ambience suggests unearthly allegiances—hinting of things to come for LS-TTL?) A fascinating, well-thought out trek through the barren hub of isolation within the mind, and the vast wilderness of uncertainty and despair (and madness, and horror) that resides within one's self. —JC Smith

The Machine in the Garden (USA) "Out of the Mist" CD 2001 Middle Pillar

Third album for this US project (& second album on Middle Pillar), sees a slight alteration in musical focus, being more heavily reliant on martial/orchestral themes and moving away from the darkwave/electronic sound of the last album (although structural influence from these sectors are still evident). As for the opening track 'fates and furies', it is a rather grand, pompous instrumental marching tune, solidifying the perception of new territory being explored. The acoustic strains of 'Valentine' bring to mind a classic apocalyptic folk sound, yet the sometimes delicate, sometimes soaring vocals of Ms. Summer Bowman add the necessary flair of individuality. The following track 'oh dear' constructed purely around multi-layered female vocals is very reminiscent of Kam Rueslatten's solo work only highlights the vocal abilities of Ms. Bowman to carry a complete song using only her voice. 'Failure' is the first (and only) track to see the vocals of Roger France used. Presented as an accompaniment to a sweeping beat and guitar oriented ethereal/electronic piece. More fantastic folk oriented acoustic guitars are displayed on 'every thing she is' — here the mood presented creates a bitter-sweet composition. Slow shifting orchestral melodies on 'wasted time' hold a brooding focus, and while the music seemingly wants to break its invisible tethers, this never actually eventuates, thus remaining subdued throughout. 'Never again' contains fragile guitar musings, being further embellished by female vocals and grand piano/synth tunes, that is partly carried through to the more commanding strains of the final track 'fade' (the track being partly darkwave and partly orchestral results in a fantastically ominous piece to close the album). Basically I would have to say that with the altered orientation of musical approach, combined with the groups already clearly evident musical talent, this CD is clearly a positive progression from the previous album.

Maruta Kommand (Eng) "holocaust rises" CD 2000 Kokamph

Maruta Kommand is a relatively new entity rising out of the English scene, and via this release has also seen the birth of a new label (run by one of Maruta Kommand's members, Andi Penguin). The CD represents a debut for both project and label. As for the compositions of Maruta Kommand, they have generated an interesting blend of electro-industrial dancefloor oriented musing and harsher tones of a death industrial guise. While I will not shy away from the fact that I have a general distaste for the former style of music, when coagulated with the later, it has created a quite palatable cross genre cocktail. After a short introductory segment, the rigid battle tank rhythms of 'Executioner' bloom into earshot with rough metallic percussion, assorted programmed noise, fleeting synth tune and morbidly distorted vocals. On an alternate tangent and being more electro than death industrial, 'Mass Grave' is a fast paced noisy programmed piece heavily reliant on slamming percussion and wavering synth textures that is certainly club oriented in style. While a good track, it is the following piece 'European Deathmarch' that is much more to my liking, containing striking dark undercurrents of noise, haunting synth textures and acerbic vocals, as the complete track gradually morphs towards slow crushing programmed percussion (that while end up being quite prominent do not detract from the ashen atmosphere). Dialogue samples and orchestral melody introduction of 'Cultural Suicide' converge with mid paced programming, synth generated noise and again the vocals with a fair wack of distortion bite — the rough texture to the sound production rounding everything out nice and harshly. Homage is duly paid to death industrial pioneer Roger Karmanik/ Brighter Death Now on the track 'Karmanik Jugend', constructing a pyre of crunch, often free from distorted and grinding (former) synth textures, resulting in a piece that could have easily been lifted off B.D.N's "the slaughterhouse" CD (and mind you this is meant as the greatest of compliments). With dredging noise and slow programming 'War on Life' has a fleeting comparison that could be made to Megaptera, yet the haunting female vocals and violin accompaniment really sets this track on an individual high and is clearly one of the best on the album. 'Hanging on the old barbed wire' being the last true album track (not including two bonus electro-industrial remix tracks — one by Melek-Tha) is a scarred landscape of barren metallic reverberations and spare snare hits constantly increasing intensity over the 7 minutes, again using female vocalisations to great effect. In passing, for a debut CD Maruta Kommand have certainly created a mature and diverse album that clearly has cross genre appeal.

Daniel Menche (USA) "crawling towards the sun" MCD 2000 Soleilmoon Recordings

In recent years Daniel Menche might not have been quite as prolific when compared to the number of items released in the early to mid 90's, nonetheless here we have a new snippet of Mr Menche's current experimental activities. As always the visual side of this is superb, with the artwork on the disc acting as the main focus. Housed within a slimline jewellcase with no slick (the CD image encompasses a rather bleak painting of the sun created by Eric Sliotik who has been responsible for artwork on earlier Menche CD's). From artwork to title - Daniel Menche has always had a knack of conjuring up fantastic titles to accompany his soundscapes, with this outing being no exception. Essentially 'crawling towards the sun' forms a single track at just a touch over 20 minutes, with the subtleties and complexities of copious layers of shifting noise are amassed - and as the title suggests, is a slow moving piece overall. Sonic textures churn at the deeper end of the sound scale giving off a searing cosmic resonance via a shimmering sound aesthetic. Cyclically the track builds intensity as the varying elements shift in and out of alignment yet remaining as drawn out drones throughout. At its loudest, the

track is still pretty subdued, using not volume to enhance the track, rather opting for increasing the mid range tonal layers to evoke sonic intensity. It is as a whole a less organic piece than previous recordings. Could it be that Mr Menche is leaving behind his earthbound sonic experimentation to explore the sonic intensity of the cosmos? Either way I am happy to blindly follow, using only the experimental sounds Mr Menche to lead the way.

Mnorham (USA) "Breathing Towers" CDS 2000 Dorobo Limited Editions

Taking on a somewhat academic approach to experimental soundworks, this disc is much like the experimental wire music that Alan Lamb has explored, incidentally also released on Dorobo. With one track at 21 minutes this is, as the cover states, a *stereo recording inside two hollow steel towers with wind blowing across the open bases*. While not as broad in scope in comparison to Alan Lamb's recordings of telegraph wires, there is still a very similar resonance in the sounds recorded. While there would also appear to be less outward movement to the piece when compared to the Alan Lamb recordings (obviously wires are more susceptible to various external forces than a solid steel structure), the limited movement of the piece creates another comparison to the slow evolution of Thomas Köner's minimalist and isolationist soundworks (evident primarily in the rumbling depths of the sounds captured, that sit at the very low end of the sound wave spectrum). Both metallic shimmering sounds and more organic wind-type textures can be discerned within the framework amongst other cavernous bass sound layers that all add up to creating an archaic, otherworldly vibe. The sounds at various points pick up and become more outwardly aggressive, seemingly attuned to weather patterns at the time of the recording, thus generating visions in the mind's eye of numerous storm fronts sweeping across the landscape. In regard to the scope of the sound, it is a fine release that involved nothing more than someone recording and mastering it, but in the process has captured a soundscape that contains elements that would appeal to fans of experimental soundworks, minimalist drone music or isolationist ambience.

Morgenstern (Ger) "cold" CD 2001 Ant-Zen

New CD from Andrea Bömer has expanded on the death industrial sonics of 1999's 'zyklen' album into a more diverse palate of tribalised power noise/power electronics, yet with a clear Morgenstern twist. While this might not be entirely evident from the bone grinding textures and wailing atmospheres of the opening title track, it is on the second track 'horny being' that things really take off. Strained keyboard textures tensely build until the incorporation of rhythmic pulsations that threaten to implode the speakers due their bass heaviness. Crispy and highly strung, the composition continues to build an almightly intensity which is nothing short of sonic bliss. 'Hypnotized', built on a death industrial looped base, mixes in a power, noise and static beat structure to create a clanging dance floor result (imagine older Imminent Starvation with a handful more distortion thrown in for good measure). The ridged typewriter beat of 'blow away my reason' works the main audible level, while a whole other world of low bass rumbling sounds sit low in the mix and builds occasionally with semi melodious sound (a vocal sample also repeats the track's title throughout). Fast paced power electronic looped feedback creates a rather catchy track on 'insight' and I'll be damned if the searing distortion drenched vocals are those of Andrea, as these are fierce enough to match any male vocal of the genre! 'Interlude' is a quieter more aquatic sounding affair, with far off idling machines, surreal vocalisations and unerring field recording sound textures, yet 'hinrichtung durch raum und zeit (re-edt)' reclaims the nosier distortion and looped based sound. A radio voice chatters incessantly whilst the sonic noise gains strength and momentum finally letting loose with a bass rhythm so damn heavy it coagulates into a barely discernable low. Minimalist percussion can likewise be detected, building the track over its lengthy yet repetitive format. 'Combat Zone' without doubt obliterated all offerings that precede it, with a pure sonic attack on the senses. Bass heavy and static driven, it builds to a point where a few pivotal sounds (at the higher end of the sound spectrum) swoop in at odd angles to reek havoc on the eardrums. The vocals are also rather phenomenal - metallic and alien like - never really rising out of the distortion/harmonic. After such an attack, 'eye' is thankfully a quieter affair being a rather beautiful and subdued tune complete with sampled choirs radiating in the background of the mix. Sounding akin to a rhinoceros tap dance, the beat is fractured and stilted including a number of piano plucked sounds that (if I am not mistaken) has been sampled from another Ant-Zen release - namely the CD by Passarani. Before you actually realise it, the beat section has taken over the composition completely and it is only a matter of time before it again veers off into its percussive driven, distortion noise territory. The last track of the 60 minute disc arrives in the form of 'over'. Framing itself with another track of looped death industrial proportions, it is both seething and brooding over its length, rounding out the track and album with some further samples choir sounds. Overall this is certainly a more diverse release than 'zyklen'. Thus it will really depend if you can appreciate more structure and beat oriented tracks within a broad death industrial styling, but for myself this presents a problem whatsoever given the sheer finesse by which these elements are intermixed into the Morgenstern sound.

Murderous Vison (USA) "suffocate...the final breath" CDR 2001 Twenty Sixth Circle

This project is the solo vision of Stephen Petrus, who also know for his work in the duo In Deaths Throes and for running Live Bat Recording Foundation. Here, Stephen offers up a coagulated cacophony of bass laden atmospheres, with tracks appearing to have been culled from two prior releases and includes a number of exclusive tracks. While given the collection format, the flow might not be as focused as one would expect for an album proper, yet this does not prevent one from succumbing to the individual atmosphere of each piece. The opener 'Book of fears' could have ended up being quite grating, yet the sharpest sonic elements have been blunted by the production to given a thick wall of fluctuating noise and industrial drones. As each individual track plays out it gradually becomes evident that despite the atmospheres that each evokes, that there is a common thread present throughout. In essence each track encompasses thick slabs of slow moving sound that have a dense and slightly muffled sound production. While 'deathwretch' might have a greater windswept atmosphere, 'yersinia pestis' has cavernous minimalist frame, 'body count rises' a noisier improvised sound and 'the pomes or urine' a non musical bass pulse, the majority of the pieces rely on a common production theme. Regardless, the greatest diversion to be found is 'anthropophagy (regurgitation)' in that this is a collaborative piece with Beal and features a rather prominent tribal beat/ percussion elements that creates an engrossing effect when sandwiched with the dense nature of the underlying sound. Lastly with the cover stating that the recordings were "induced in trance like states" it is also a rather apt description for the overall atmosphere. This is an interesting listen particularly if noise ambience in the vein of Grunspalter is your thing.

Nasopharyngeal (USA) "Endless" CD 2000 Crowd Control Activities

"Endless" is a very good title for this CD as this is the feeling you get when listening to the one track, 74-minute odyssey. Back to basics old school electronica is what we have here, sounding mostly improvised in the way it is pushed in varying directions through the course of its journey. The programmed drum machine beats (of a mid-paced style) are almost a constant throughout, as the random bleeps, noises, and grinding/droning electronics do their thing. However these are not really beats that one can dance to; rather they act as both a bridging element and a focal point - in the flow of the sound they are just more elements for the composer to manipulate and twist as he sees fit. Likewise elements of the backing electronic layers seem to amass, sweep through the speakers then dissipate before periodically re-converging later (with hints of tunes occasionally arriving as lone keyboard notes, only adding to the hazy atmospheres created). The virtually 'endless' stream of sounds coiled on this

CD are composed in a surprisingly engaging and coherent manner, despite this having ended up being quite a short review! And talk about 'surprising' - between this and the House of Low Culture CD, CCA have once again come up with the goods, but with projects that are quite unlike anything they have previously released.

Necrophorus (Swe) "Gathering Composed Thoughts" CD 2000 Dragon Flight Recordings

For those wondering, this is not a new album, rather (as alluded to in the title) a compilation of earlier Necrophorus tracks, select reworkings of others, and two tracks from the limited 10" picture vinyl entitled "Yoga" (which was reviewed in full way back in Issue 28). The two lengthy and meditative tracks entitled "Yoga - part 1" and "Yoga - part 2", open the album. Although fleetingly infused with Middle Eastern melodies, the somewhat minimalist dark ambient styling of these tracks is akin to the most recent full-length Necrophorus album, "Drifting in Motion". "Spitchasher", the third track, is one of the most recent compositions on this release, consisting of tonal shifts of sound, outbursts of semi-metallic platter, and groans emanating from seemingly unhuman sources - all generating an unnerving aura. It has to be said that the reworking of "Sophysis", (formerly on the first Necrophorus album) is nothing short of brilliant, that slowly sweeps along over 10 minutes with depressive melodies, atmospheric tonal waves, gong chimes and even field recordings of singing birds. As the album progresses it becomes evident that the earlier recordings are also the most rigidly composed, much like the compositions of Peter Andersson's main project, Raison d'être. These earlier tracks usually work around a composition of layered keyboards and the sparse interplay of down-bowed melodies, sometimes with prominent tribalesque percussion. As for as light deviation, "The Dormant Being" is quite neo-classical in construction and even operatic despite its lack of vocals (stranger still, this sounds as if it could fit perfectly as a keyboard intro to an album by any atmospheric black metal band, as is the case with the following track, "A second very heavy grief"). If I did not know otherwise, I would swear that the track "Soporific" was recorded at the same sessions for the self-titled Fata Morgana album that the infamous Morhis had operating as a side project a few years back! At just a shade away from being cheesy (as was the case with Fata Morgana), this is admittedly quite a good number! To conclude the album, a better choice could not have been made with "In Mourning", rather than opting for a depressive air, presents a quite uplifting neo-classical and almost baroque piece including percussion that is just short of being mid-paced programming. While the flow of the album might at times feel a little disjointed, this is really only due to the fact that it was never planned to be an album proper, rather a release showcasing the progression of this project over time. As a collection of good individual tracks this is worth your attention if you have a fleeting interest in any of Peter Andersson's musical output.

No Festival of Light (Swe) "If god lived on earth, we would break his windows" CD 2000 Fluttering Dragon

The new opus for this premier anti-Christian project returns with a rather tongue in cheek album title, possibly representing a finger in the face of ultra evil types. Low bass rumbles offset with looped vocal snippet repeating "the greatest trick... didn't exist" introduces the CD on "The Unexisting Trick". Yet, as the album shifts forward it is evident that the clinical minimalist sound of the last CD (on Functional Organization) has been mixed up with earlier more suffocating dark ambient styling. The second track "7405926" starts by jumping between hypnotic minimalism and blasts of harsh static, yet things solidify creating dense dungeon like atmospheres, deep groans and tribal percussive beats that come full circle back to electronic noise manipulations. Distant flutes and bass heavy percussive sounds shift. "Onomaka Brush" into quite rousing tribal groove, continuing in this fashion throughout, whilst also introducing some deathly sounding fog horn blasts (possibly summoning the minions of blasphemous cherubs from the underworld). Slightly symphonic in tone, (due to the drawn out synth textures), "Day of Wrath" resembles a mixture of raison d'être and desolent margins, particularly with the use of clanging metallic sounds and sampled choir chanting and could have easily been culled from outtakes of either of the aforementioned groups (in other words a damn fine composition). Rather urgent percussion makes up the basis of "Deus Osius" with some sort of sampled voice (a ritual chant perhaps?) and other radical type voices buried underneath. Midway through additional percussive sounds are introduced to embellish the tribalised aura, whilst static minimalism adds a diversion to the final passage prior to the percussion having one final spin. Encompassing a track of rough dark ambience, "Jigoku-Source of Eternal Joy" meanders along slowly with loosely constructed loops and choppy percussion in a guise of darkly muffled production. To bring the album full circle the final track is an adaptation of the opening piece, but at the beginning the full vocal sample is heard but once ("the greatest trick that devil ever pulled was convincing the world he did not exist"). After this the vocal loop reverts to the shortened version over a partially ominous underlying drone and semi-melodious synth passage. Certainly this album is another fine product from the Swedish dark ambient/industrial underground, even if it has originated from one of the lesser-known groups.

Norhaunt (Nor) "The Ominous Silence" CD 2000 Fluttering Dragon

After releasing "The Ominous Silence" as a self produced CDR, Norhaunt were signed to Polish record label Fluttering Dragon and re-released it (with bonus material). It also sounds like the album might have been re-mastered, as the music seems to have a little more crispness and clarity to their atmospheres. Mixing rain drenched field recordings with synth-generated textures, "Might and Misanthropy" commences the proceedings, awash with sweeping bass tones, an understated piano tune, and a mournful violin passage that gives it a very dark ambient/neo-classical hybrid feel. At close to 13 minutes, things meander along slowly, veering off on a couple of darker, more subdued tangents, including an acoustic guitar interlude, a section of folk oriented flute and tortured vocal shrieks akin to what is found in black metal. The track "Norhaunt" rumbles on in a cavernous guise with shifting sound treatments buried in the mix, later with harsh whispers and a barely accentuated piano tune. More field recordings and an industrial noise pulse make up the backing of "Der bor en frost her inne", while an acoustic tune form the main musical counterpart. Gradually things take a 'darker' turn (by that I mean 'good') with dark factory clatter and a sustained (synth-produced) string movement. "De sorte traer" again utilises the acoustic guitar in amongst an intricately textured sound backing and pained spoken vocals reciting a passage in the projects native tongue. "Running out of time" reminds me somewhat of early raison d'être with sweeping layers, chant like drones and church bells, however the track remains distinctive with multiple samples of ticking clocks and a lone voice somewhat desperately stating the track's title. On first hearing "In rain" the piano tune appeared a little out of time, but on subsequent listens the off kilter playing only enhances its charm. "And I Fade Away" is a little more experimental than the previous tracks with its mid-paced keyboard tune set amongst dungeon-like clatter, dripping water and far off noises (attention is held in the fore with some spoken vocals). One of the bonus tracks "Pain is better" extends the atmosphere of the CD perfectly with its darkly composed acoustic guitars and piano accompaniment. Field recording textures and spoken vocals flesh out the musical skeleton, likewise remaining through the middle minimalist section that includes some fantastically haunting vocal wailing from former Agnostic member Nacht (the vocals sounding as if they are emanating from a far off cavernous depth). "Ode" is another newer track (and likewise the final musical piece) that operates in a dark ambient guise of sparse ominous rumblings, extended drones and again some great vocal contributions from Nacht, to create a quite unnerving atmosphere. The CD has an enhanced feature that incorporate a rather bleak video of a funeral inside (another bonus track). The music of the

video is yet another pearl of a song, encompassing and ultra depressing atmosphere evoked through acoustic guitar, piano and backing field recordings (along with the use of a number of dialogue samples). As for the video, it uses a series of black and white images (illustrating themes of the track's title) that have been merged into real media file slide show, however via the use of a zoom and pan feature within the images it creates the perception of film (and is certainly well done overall). Basically the overall aura of this release quite reminds me of Ildfrost's "Natanel" CD, although this is somewhat less composed with a larger variety of sound sources. What I guess I am getting is that a comparison can be made to the overall dark atmosphere and morose classical feel of the stated item. The atmospheres presented definitely show clarity of ideas and I think the use of natural field recordings as a backdrop really enhances the depth of sound. Piano movements, string sections and acoustic guitars are used sparingly, and only enhance the atmosphere at the appropriate times. A CD definitely worth checking out and a group I will certainly be keeping an eye on with future releases.

Novy Svet (Aut) "Cuori Dipetrolio" CD 2000 Hau Ruk (via Tesco Distribution)

The beyond bizarre Austrian project Novy Svet are back with their second full length CD; however here things seem a touch more subdued, and less focussed on the sounds of a drunken accordion player that figured prominently on the first disc. A slower conglomeration of tuneful sampled loops often make up the framework of the tracks. This is the case with track 2, "Punished with Lorging", a relatively straightforward orchestral/martial piece that nevertheless bears the trademark vocals of the Novy Svet sound (the same goes for 'Utopia', with its ritual sounding hypnotic loops and low, crooning male vocals). The acoustic guitar loops on 'Traicion' are a nice touch in amongst a slow ritual type beat (and again the morose vocals), while 'Un cambio sobre de amor' is hands down the most twisted track of the album. This can really only be described as Austrian folk reggae, but it's still highly listenable and very enjoyable. 'Sin Fin' contains a dredging bass loop, creating a slight death industrial sound that is only enhanced with scraping textures, whilst the vocals remain a low whisper - all in all representing a pleasing shift in focus. The sluggish double bass tune and infrequently plucked guitar morph into their own loops on 'Linga Alba' before branching out on yet another tangent and evoking in the process an immaculate late night drug hazed vibe. Clocking in at over 22 minutes, the last track is a miasma of ritual beats, loops scattered sound, vocals, etc., that lasts for around 4 minutes before lapsing for 16 minutes into a comatose silence, only to reappear to conclude the album with a quirky type folk/dance track that is more reminiscent of the first CD. Without a doubt this is Novy Svet through and through, but on this second album they have produced something that might just be more palatable for average underground listeners who are not regular frequenters of bizarre song-styled albums.

Novy Svet (Aut) "Aspiral III" 10" ep 2000 White Label

Novy Svet, (the group of the moment for me), return with another release, with the musical direction on this recording having been directed by an old school industrial loop aesthetic and mixed with a large dose of the group's quirkiness. A slow mixing piece, the opening track 'origen' is built on a slow industrial looped beat and barely discernable melody, with the male vocals carrying the tune in a lamenting style. The rather rough looping aesthetic plays through to the following piece 're delle cose', but with the use of shrill a violin loop, clanging percussion, and treated vocals it creates a fantastically disorientating miasma of sound. Third track 'panika' builds various loops of horn instruments to a groggy sway over a solid base of grinding elements and sampled vocal loops to generate this increased industrial aspect to the Novy Svet sound. 'Rituale' has a fantastic aura of echoed atmospherics that acts as the foundation to mid paced looped strings, bass guitar tune and percussion, including the most chaotic and upfront vocals I have heard from the group. With loops falling in and out of sync, all adding to the bizarreness that Novy Svet are able to pull together for their unique style. Side B caused me a bit of frustration prior to realising that the grooves have been cut from the inside edge out. However, maybe I should have taken notice of the fact that the spirals printed on the labels of opposing vinyl sides already seemed to indicate this (one other thing I did however note was that the word 'dogstar' is etched into side A, whilst 'godstar' is etched into side B. Make of this what you will). Here only one lengthy track is presented ('noyol quimati'), opting for a rather bland cyclic and tribal piece of slow percussion and assorted sound loops and the trademark vocal being more close to spoken or drawn being recorded quite low in the mix as the track catatonically plays out. Not the worst Novy Svet piece, but clearly not the best either. Being released on the White Label this is of course pressed into white vinyl, with a textured cover and gold foil motif stamp are simply stunning (and limited to mere 200 copies).

Novy Svet (Aut)/Der Blutharsch (Aut) "Inutiles" 7" 2000 WKN

Talk of an infuriating release - limited to a ludicrous 99 copies - the first time I played this heavyweight clear vinyl, it appeared that it was only one-sided (with only the Novy Svet track being evident). To make things even more perplexing, the grooves of the vinyl revolve from the inside to outside edge! After a few rotations of the Novy Svet track - followed by a few curses! - I ended up emailing Albin to see if my copy was somehow a mis-pressing, as there simply did not appear to be a Der Blutharsch track on it. Well, as was then pointed out to me, it seemed that the answer was right under my nose all along; the 7" was indeed single-sided, but the two tracks were grooved one next to each other (meaning that you have to physically place the needle outside the normal lead in groove, to be able drop into the groove of the Der Blutharsch track). Up-tempo and even slightly cheesy in tone, the Novy Svet number melds standard kit drumming with low register piano tune and organ with (as always) bizarre semi-chanted vocals doing their thing. Not the best track from them I have ever heard, but still unquestionably Novy Svet. As for Der Blutharsch, this is where the real action is - a top-notch piece and alone worth the price of this expensive vinyl. An evocative violin introduces the piece (to later arrive again midsection) whilst elements of rousing chanted vocals, slow pounding drumming, ritual percussion and a deep resonating orchestral horn melody build a stunning atmosphere, with slightly tweaked spoken vocals embellished with virtuosic flair. This is certainly Der Blutharsch at their stunning best, which is nothing less than what I had hoped for when ordering this. One last thing to mention about the vinyl is that there is no protective locked groove at the outside edge, meaning that if you are not in close proximity to the stereo when the track finishes, the needle simply drops off onto the (still rotating) record platter! For all its physical nuisances, it is as if Albin stated that 'my records shouldn't be too easy to play. Always take care when listening to Der Blutharsch'. Sound advice when considering this one... And before I forget to mention it, the packaging has a simple but nicely arcane hand screen printed image of martyr and eagle on (you guessed it!) brown card.

Ordo Equitum Solis (Ita) "A Divine Image" Picture 7" EP 2000 World Serpent Distribution

I have generally found that, while they may look more stunning, on most vinyl picture discs the sound often suffers more than that of standard vinyl (tending to accrue higher amounts of crackles and hiss). Is this due to the different type of material required for pressing? Who knows. Anyway this O.E.S is quite picturesque in visual presentation - basically the image of the velvet clad female half of the group clinching it for me! With the title track up first, 'A divine image' is an up-tempo, dreamy keyboard number, with atmospheric programmed percussion and angelic female choir vocals that give way to singular sung main vocal line that in style has quite a similarity to Madonna (I have heard this comparison before). From the pop aspect of the vocals, the meandering piano line that sneaks in at selected moments only adds to the quite pop-influenced sound and creates a very nice track overall. On the flip-side,

'Before the Morning Rose' harks back to their more traditional neo-folk sound, with acoustic guitar tune and interplay of male and female vocals. An accordion and keyboard following the tune of the guitar is likewise a nice touch. This release is yet another item in the World Serpent series of 7" picture EPs that have also included items from Backword and Belborn. Who will be next, you may ask?

Ordo Rosarius Equilibrio (Swe) "Make Love, And War (The Wedlock Of Roses)" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industry

The first track, "Beloved Kitty And The Piercing Bolts Of Amor," is an amusingly looped piece of aged samples juxtaposing a rough-hewn German vocal (probably culled from WWII, or thereabouts) as it urges on an obviously aroused female to the brink of orgasm. (Well, okay, the female participant may just be sampled from an adult film, but there are timbres within her... um, ecstatic revelatory cries upon every obvious thrust, that seem born of times long ago...) It is a strangely appropriate introduction to the agenda spirited by Tomas Petterson's newly christened Ordo Rosarius Equilibrio. With the exit of Chelsea Krook from the (moist) folds of Ordo Equilibrio, Tomas has changed the band's name to Ordo Rosarius Equilibrio: "the wedlock between equilibrium & roses-Ordo Rosarius Equilibrio/The Order of Roses & Balance". Even without her dispassionate, monotone sexuality (her vocals always expressed the conflict of fire and ice, an arousing confluence of voluptuous sensuality expressed amidst bland recitation... the recitation of the prostitute, the sexual deviant, drenched in carnality to the point of listlessness), the prevalent sexuality still dominates. (As extracted from within the carcass of the dead...) Through the tracks that follow, Tomas' lyrics deliciously romanticize a restrained erotica amongst apocalyptic visions, be it the erotica of decay ("Make Love, And War"), or of transformation ("Never Before At The Beauty Of Spring"), or of corrupt spirituality ("Ashen Like Love And Black Like The Snow"). The music is acoustic guitar driven, but not without an abundance of synth and sampled textures. An amusingly pompous prelude to simmering finality, as mankind destroys itself between the split, scarred and bloodied thighs of Mother Earth... and all Hell is unleashed! Quite intriguing! —JC Smith

Orplid (Ger) "Barbarossa" 10" EP 2000 Eis & Licht

Orplid have over the past few years slowly been raising their profile within the underground, melding quite stunning acoustic guitar apocalyptic folk odes with more neo-classical movements. Having already released a CD (in a two different formats), 10" ep, and MCD (these being the items I am aware of), 'Barbarossa' represents the new vinyl release. Taking a more tribal-esque/neo-classical stance, Side A offers up a lengthy track of deep warlike ancestral drumming, organ tune and clean sung vocals in the German language that borders on a deep classical/chanting style. Further layers of sweeping winds and vocal choirs, adds to the flair of the piece, but in most part this track strides onward at a consistent pace despite morphing through quieter and louder segments. The flip side of the vinyl commences in an even more epic style with mournful choirs radiating sorrowful melodies over a backing of distant bombing. Things slip back into a quieter forlorn classical synth melody, only to be overshadowed by a rather stern and aggressive German voice reciting a speech/written passage for the remainder of the piece (the underlying musical element remains throughout). The next and final piece seems to take its cue from the prior piece as it is much more aggressive, clearly evident from outset of shrill wail of air raid sirens. With a track of epic orchestral proportions, marching footfalls add to the pounding martial rhythms, further completed with deep orchestral brass instrumentation and soaring strings to create a grandiose war-mongering aura. For the multi-faceted elements that Orplid incorporates into their style, they certainly handle each brilliantly melding them together in the creation of music with a strong folk and classical European flavour.

Ozymandias (???) "Kamak" CD 2000 Ramses Records (via World Serpent Distribution)

Being an album that was recorded with direct influence and inspiration derived from a trip that the artist undertook to the Egyptian temple 'Kamak', I assumed there might have been quite a bit of Middle Eastern influence infused within the compositions. Yet this is not the case with the music, which is quite standard classical piano melodies and tunes. Despite the music not having a clear relationship with the subject matter, it is clear that the songs are from a formally trained musical mind within the scope of the melancholic and understated piano meanderings. The 12 tracks are quite subtle in style and are all solo pieces, without multiple layers. Although superbly written and executed, this album is not partially dark, brooding or bombastic, which are generally the common themes threading through most current neo-classical albums. I am thus unsure to which segment of the underground this would really appeal, as it is essentially the type of CD my father (quite a connoisseur of classical music) would listen to. Nonetheless this is interesting.

Panzar (Swe) "Panzar" 7" Pic 2000 Panzar (via: CMI)

Panzar is another project by Sweden's most prolific manipulator of sonic darkness, Peter Andersson. To list all of the projects in which he is involved would be an exercise in futility, as by the time you read this a few more may have arisen! Anyway, this 7" by Panzar is a scintillating teaser for something more (I hope). 'Inertia' casts metallic synth shadows over blasted sonic terrain, while percussion drops like bombs from the heavens. The background, the smudged sonic canvases that this bombardment corrupts, is reamed by radiant strands of feedback (or wily synths) and muddy, obscure vocals. This canvas seems to (possibly) incorporate textures derived from Heid and/or maybe Hollow Earth, but they are stretched, kneaded and gnawed on in such a way as to distinguish itself as a singular entity dispersing dread. "Tensor" includes German vocals as they wind through a latticework of thick, mollen white noise, upon which clanking percussion, marching off into death, steers a panzer tank into oblivion... It is restrained, contained, insistent, deceptively sinister, the rumble of the tank crushing everything in its path.... It's amazing the way, with each of Peter's many projects, an actual distinction of sound and focus can be gleaned. The only thing I ask of Panzar is more, please! —JC Smith

Poota (Aus) "Chunks" 3" CDR 2000 label: KETTLE

Poota is a collaborative project between Andrew Kettle (aka KETTLE) and Loyd Barrett (aka Brainlego) that has been operating from some 4 years with no official releases until now. This release is the amalgam of what the artists' felt was the best material derived from 1998 recordings (studio and live) and, by the artists' own admission, showcases 'skill and spontaneity, innocence and experience'. The first thing that is evident is that the cut-up, glitched framework of both their individual projects have been somewhat amassed together within these recordings, creating broad collages of intertwined malfunctioning electro static, rhythms and samples. The first of the cdr's five tracks appears to work on two levels - one presenting a broad deep undercurrent, the other a mid-ranged scattered rhythmic element that generates a mostly soothing sound presentation. This framework is again utilised on the second track, yet as here many more sonic layers are drawn upon (mainly at the high end spectrum) to create overall a more chaotic offering. Likewise, with its focus on a high-end blip tune, it evokes a galactic spatial aura that later transforms into stunning and solidly focussed deep rhythm (that might just be comparable to segments of Atomine Elektrine's 'Archimetical Universe' CD). Track three brings a drawn out playful style to its odd manipulations of a quite crunchy, centrally focussed mid-paced beat. Pure sonic experimentation abounds on the fourth piece, where gradually shifting sounds, static and (tune/beat/voice) samples generate a loose focus to the occasionally fierce and quick-paced sonics. The fifth and final track is simply

stunning due to its use of a sampled segment of Indian tabla drum percussion to create a brooding atmosphere. With this central sample offset against a subdued tune and understated electronic treatments, the track presents an excellent blend of traditional and modern sounds. Despite the artists' acknowledging that this release offers more of a 'historical fragment... than a new work of evolution in music', it is still a fine example of the creativity of the underground/experimental music scene in Australia.

Predominance (Ger) "Nocturnal Gates Of Incidence" CD 2000 Loki Foundation

A wind from the outer reaches of space and time (it caresses the cool flesh of infinity) arises "From Ancient Aeons," accompanied by strange, almost ritualistic vocals of a cryptic origin; they seem ancient, culled from some banished realm of forsaken obscurity. (The sensation is like that of an American Indian chanting...) Synths rise to sway and harshly rub the bass textures, the mood one of mysterious allegiances of anomalous pedigree, as clanking, muddy percussion and subtly sinister tones climb the invisible walls of a vast abyss. My initial take on Nocturnal Gates Of Incidence was that it was not quite on par with the excellent Hindenburg LP. Of course, they are two very different creations, and repeated listens have moved it quite possibly, beyond that mighty signpost, and definitely down dark highways of unexplored space that many of the dark sonicscape practitioners on the (amazing!) LOKI label traverse. 'Aurora Borealis' resonates with stern, anxious vocal/choral aspirations wrapped in swarthy, brooding synths. The trepidation-laced lyrics transcend the imposed limitations of time ("Open the gates of incidence/Where all began and everything ends") and plead for rescue from the clutches of eternal dismay ("Save our souls from the blackness/The stars remain like eyes of the furies"). "If The Last Star Burns Out," possibly the darkest exploration here, is ignited by metal on metal percussion crashing on the bruised hide of the sporadic engines of emptiness. The sprawling emptiness is dappled with tones that evoke unease via scattered noise discharges: snowflakes of cracked metal, stinging lashes of grim discomfort. The possible ramifications of what would transpire if the last star burned out are expressed in clearly enunciated tones, a foreboding observation of deliciously rendered darkness. The synth waves of "Once They Arrive" swell with an odd, optimistic beauty, while appealing, German accented vocals expound on the imminent arrival of... something (other beings, of interstellar origin?... or is this a more divine apotheosis?...) that will arrive, crossing eons of time, and link all that has been with all that is... Nocturnal Gates Of Incidence is one of the rare occurrences in dark sonicscape music in which the varied vocals and vocal approaches really broaden the sonic palette, adding drama and perspective. A remarkable, cosmically explorative presentation! —JC Smith

Psychonaut (USA) "Liber Al Vel Legis" advance CDR 2001 Athanor

After being delayed due to copyright issues over the use of imagery and text associated with the estate of Aleister Crowley, this album (recorded back in 1998) is finally obtaining an official release (the bio further states that this was actually the first recording of Michael Ford under the Psychonaut banner). Anyway, given that this album predates the last Psychonaut release (likewise on Athanor) it actually encompasses a different sound and focus. Where 'The Witch's Sabbath' was predominantly based on cathartic tribal and rhythmic percussive works. Here there is a more sparse musical outline containing often a heavy emphasis on spoken (yet slightly echoed/treated) vocals that recite passages from Crowley's 'The Book of the Law (particularly conducting the 'Ritual of Liber Samekh for the Attainment of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel')'. Minimalist in nature, the backing sounds contain sparse collages of echoed and resonating textures seeming to aim at evoking a hypnotic state where the mind can transcend its earthbound surrounds (particularly when contemplating the words being spoken) and from this perspective the description of 'Astral Musick' is an appropriate portrayal of the shimmering synth textures. That said, there are a number of tracks that do contain sound elements that crop up on later recordings, particularly the loose frameworks of tribal percussion and sustained and wavering non melodic wood wind instruments. Overall these are used as complimentary elements to the main framework. I would have to attest that this recording has a much greater ritualistic air than the tribal movements of the other Psychonaut recordings I have heard, and for this reason alone this CD is more engaging. Again and as with the previous release, this will be of specific interest for those who have a more than a passing interest in ritualistic magic particularly of the Crowleian variety.

Puissance (Swe) "All Hail the Mushroom Cloud" MCD 2000 Fluttering Dragon

Well, while this is meant to be the 'new MCD', it seems that the tracks were actually recorded back in 1998, which has me wondering if these were recorded around the time of the last album, 'Mother of Disease' (not counting the re-mix album 'War On!', which also contained 2 new tracks). While this MCD is good, it is a little disappointing when compared to an MP3 track I have heard, a brand new piece called 'A Call to Arms' which, in my opinion, closest to the pinnacle of what Puissance can create. Anyway this CD comes in a deluxe digipack and contains 4 tracks or 'acts' relating to the mini-album's title. While the heavy orchestral/industrial framework is still utilised, there seems to be a underlying looped element to many of the sounds, giving the industrial underbelly a more modern edge than noted on previous offerings. Reasonable convincing synth choirs soar as a backing to 'Act 1', while other elements focus on mid-ranged string segments. Mid-paced and reasonable repetitive, there is no real divergence from the main focus once it is established. All 4 tracks have a clear similarity in direction and approach, meaning that each of the pieces are generally on par with each other and all contain the trademark mid-paced brooding orchestral framework and industrial martial aura. 'Act IV' differs only slightly in that it has a tinge of folkish element created via a flute tune, thus making it the best track here). If you have already heard Puissance's music then you already have an opinion of it, and this MCD presents nothing that would alter that perception—good or bad, depending on your persuasion.

Puissance (Swe) "A Call to Arms" 7" EP 2001 Selfless Recordings

Having referenced the title track of this 7" in the above review, it seems this fantastic composition has finally been furnished with an official release on new American label Selfless Recordings. And talking of 'A Call to Arms' - guttural yet slightly metallic percussion and a lone flute tune introduce this mid paced orchestral epic. Soon after, sparse chimes and a slow piano tune builds the composition up to the next level, whilst the incorporation of martial snare drumming and layers of orchestral choir voices ensures Puissance's musical sights are set high. With this track building up until the final moments, this is essentially the pinnacle of what (I knew) Puissance has the potential to create. Likewise throughout this track a monotone voice recites a page from the Puissance manifesto, however the philosophy here seems to have taken a step away from the previous 'destroy everything' attitude towards a metaphor of a fatalistic martyr figure ("*It's a pointless struggle but we will fight them... still losing I'm sure, but at least alive, for a short while longer*"). The spoken passage is further reprinted on the cover, being well written and serious, highlighting a certain maturation from earlier slightly more simplistic written passages that Puissance used as lyrics. 'Religion of Force' (the side B track), is instrumental and whilst not quite as epic as side A, is more of an industrial/martial evocation. Rigidly sharp and atmospheric mid paced percussion strides forth from the outset, set alongside sparsely constructed and relatively non musical atmospheric wavering sound layers (sivers of treated radio voices can also be faintly detected). By no means would I say this is a bad track, rather it just tends to take a back seat to side A. Pressed into white vinyl and limited to 880 (I'm unsure if this is a minor attempt at controversy), the cover is simplistic yet effective in design, and certainly worth checking out.

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Pure (Aut) and Ultra Milkmaids (Fra) "s[e]nd" CD 2000 Vacuum

When it comes to experimental 'art-noise', this disc displays the kind of sounds that I tend to appreciate the most. This is basically derived from the perspective that while not particularly musical, the sounds rather work with a drawn out aesthetic and is therefore akin to sprawling drones – albeit more minimalist and fragile by virtue of the experimental style. Shimmering, warm tones radiate fragility from the album's outset, and with such sounds being akin to what I know of Ultra Milkmaids, I am also assuming that Pure covers similar territory when recording solo. In small segments the drawn-out textures become intentionally disjointed and fractured as if the CD is mistracking; yet the music's ability to pull this off convincingly is just part of the CD's charm. The slow evolution of content means that one track meanders into the next, emphasising the minimalist nature of the sound works presented. Regardless, the atmospheres created gradually evolve from warm textures on the first few tracks to more clinical and glacial sounds, such as on the lengthy 14 minute third track. Although there are never any real tunes and melodies to be detected within this release, it works with sparse electronic harmonies and tones to give a fleeting 'musical' reference to the sound. Track six is quite a bit more quirky and playful with textured sound glitches, but this is really only a fleeting moment of increased intensity within the complete album. Overall this is an album that can be enjoyed both as foreground or background listening, and I have quite enjoyed what is on offer.

Raven's Bane (USA) "sorrow breeds" CDR 2001 Live Bait Recording Foundation

This project a solo excursion by Profane Grace member Robert Cruzan and I imagine this little snippet of information should peak a few interests. While the ghostly atmospheres of the main project are less evident here, death ambient would still certainly be an appropriate description for this. Dense, slow evolving loops, machine orientated hums/drones and shimmering drawn out keyboard textures construct the quite minimalist auras of each offering, as if presenting various telekinetic transmissions from the netherworld. Likewise even without track titles such as 'plaguehost', 'shrine of sufferance' and 'cacophony', the sound already contains a deathly morbid edge that is enough to give the listener an aural peek into the shadow world. From the liner notes, it seems that this monotone and minimalist nature of the recordings has a specific purpose to generate a plane for the mind to escape to and I will certainly vouch for this fact as when playing this CD whilst going to sleep it creates an aura that is never too jolting, thus the perfect counterpart for pre-sleep contemplation. Now having said this, as the album progresses the aura of the tracks gradually become more urgent and damning in tone, marking a clear direction and evolution of each piece in relation to the next. The fact that this is a CDR and limited to only 100 copies, the aesthetics of the colour card cover have been immaculately presented utilising the graphic talents of Mike Riddick (who incidentally produced the cover of Spectrum #31). Putting non related topics aside, this is worth checking out.

Boyd Rice & Fiends (USA/UK/Aut) "Wolf Pact" MC (advance pre-release) 2001 NEROZ

Before you ask, no it is not a spelling mistake, the working title is in fact Boyd Rice & 'Fiends' & not 'Friends' as was the case with an earlier album. Anyway, with the auspicious accolade of accommodating the creative inputs of Boyd Rice (of course), Albin Julius and Douglas P, this alone will provide ample reason to generate a significant amount of interest in this project. Recorded in Adelaide (Australia) during February, 2001 this is a rather eclectic album that blends selected elements of the music created by its contributors on an individual basis (those being NON, Death in June or Der Blutharsch), creating a diverse recording project. 'The Watery Leviathan' opens with a celebratory acoustic folk piece, resplendent with backing keyboard melodies, chiming church bells and understated percussion as the spoken/ sung vocals of Boyd are presented in an unassuming style. Title track 'Wolf Pact' is another dreamy acoustic/keyboard number (although there is always a darker undercurrent scratching beneath the surface) where Albin presents spoken vocals in his native tongue alongside choir like backing vocals. Unyielding martial sounding loops and whispered vocals of Boyd introduce 'World's Collide', which is further embellished with sparse keyboards, acoustic tune and orchestral layers, whilst 'Fire Shall Come' with its gruffly shouted vocals and heavy stately percussion is reminiscent of the Di6's track 'C'est Un Reve'. 'Bad Blood' works itself into quite a cascading church organ dirge, where spoken vocals are further lopped, treated are added to the mix (although remains quite hard to follow/decipher). 'Rex Mundi' with its slow neo-orchestral/martial sound is comparable to the first Der Blutharsch album if not the works of TMLHAC, yet with the spoken vocals of Boyd and constant whip cracking (most often associated with Di6 recordings), it creates a positive mix of the distinctive styles. 'Hamlet' is a rather abrasive melange of screamed/ spoken vocal loops that is further manipulated and tweaked, then leading into 'Bad Luck and Curses' that is a short piece of manipulated/reversed snippet of Boyd's spoken vocals. 'Murder Bag' presents an unusual sounding rhythmic industrial piece with hints of discordant trumpet playing and segments of movie dialogue the source of which I'm not entirely sure of (on a hunch it could they be snippets taken from still long awaited 'Pearls Before Swine' that both Doug and Boyd star in). After playing through the sparse soundscape of 'Joe Liked to Go (to the Cemetery)', 'People Change' reverts to the acoustic guitar format mixing in more of Boyd's spoken vocals and odd backing samples and sounds (Albin at the mixing desk I assume?!). Introduced with storming rain, this is used as a partially manipulated platform 'The Reign Song' whereby Boyd speaks his mind further, while the lengthily titled 'The Forgotten Father/ The Tomb of the Forgotten Father' clearly has the stamp of Albin all over it with its rhythmic yet classical approach (however it is less like his Der Blutharsch material, and more comparable to the material he recorded with Douglas as Death in June). Piano melody and yet more vocals from Boyd complete the vocal portion of the track before late in the piece it tangents off into a heavy martial percussive guise with xylophone and orchestral elements marking a heftier sound. Final track 'The Orchid and the Death's Head' marks a soundscape style of deep drones, understated sparse tune and various sampled and spoken vocals that build intensity through to the dying seconds. Not that this album will really need any encouragement to sell, it is both a diverse and intriguing amalgam of recording influence.

Salt (Ger) "re.wasp" 3"CDI/box 2000 Ant-Zen

As much as a piece of art as a musical release, the landmark 100' Ant-Zen item is a celebration of the man behind the Ant-Zen empire – the one and only Stephen Alt. Packaged in a sturdy cardboard slide box, the 3" CD is housed in a miniature gatefold pouch, along with a series of thirteen postcards that illustrate and display the graphic design genius of S.Alt. Basically I would have been more than happy with the release on the packaging front, regardless of quality of musical content, yet the music is also top quality, consisting of two tracks – part noise soundscape and part glitch riddled technoid experimentation. 'One' shifts forward at a minimalist pace for a few minutes prior to a rather prominent and very engaging electro static rhythm whipping things into a low-key frenzy. From here, constant yet fractured layers build, overlap and fall away, repeating loose cycles in a partly electric, partly mechanical guise. 'Two' again runs with an electro static framework with varying frequencies characterising initial segments. Glitched sounds take a more prominent position on this piece, forging tonal layered experimentations until things sweep off in a mass of throbbing static intensity. Falling somewhere between noise experimentation and power electronics this is certainly a nicely hued and quite blistering intense composition. Of course with this item being limited, some searching might be required.

Sator Absentia (Fra) "Mercurian Orgasms" CD 2000 Dark Vinyl

Sator Absentia is Cedric Codognet, whose work I had previously heard on the Asmodor CD, Involution Toward Chthonian Depths. Sator Absentia incorporates some of the elements of that disc, while chiseling out its own variations of melancholic darkness tinged with weirdness. "Sounds Of Mercurian Devotion" opens with a scratchy violin (spectral timbres stolen from Lovecraft's Erich Zahn...?) caressed by tonalities of discomfot (matching the violin, they are almost vocal, though of ludicrous allegiance). Additional mood is colored by beautifully sparse (tears like plucked icicles) acoustic guitar and scattered background voices (a crowd, a mass...except for the laughter...), all shrouded under a cloak of midnight synths. Techno plates shift during "Panorama," extricating a violin born of the darkest agony in the process. An ache is wound into the strings, distraught, tattered bowing drawing out both the pain and despair in lusciously stroked cadences. Low rumbling fills the void, a platform upon which the brittle violin performs. The vista grows more expansive as the track stretches, ominous synths rising to tick the strings, the saliva causing the violin bow to slide sporadically... Absolutely riveting! Processional percussion etched with slivers of splintered, moaning violin opens "Enter The Red Garden Of Frustration." The mood is fraught with ritual, as if something is about to commence. But that possibility is deemed impotent, the only thing the music inspires is sadness of an undefined nature, not simply born of depression, but of something more tactile (yet elusive). The music on Mercurian Orgasms has a quirky underbelly, despite the inherent dark foundation, that seems most enigmatic; the violins, in particular, seem bowed by hands of unearthly origin. Impressive! JC Smith

Scorn (Eng) "Greetings from Birmingham" CD 2000 Hymen

For all intents and purposes, the new full-length Scorn album looks and sounds like an extension of the 'Imaginaria Award' CD EP reviewed last issue – meaning that the previous item was really a taster to this, the main dish (it also seems the original title of this has been altered from the previously alluded "no joke movement" – however this slogan graces the inner sleeve). As for the music, the grating, gutturally heavy drum'n bass/hip hop flavoured tunes are again presented here in all their tweaked and repetitive glory. The twisted and morphed pulverizing textures, deep sweeping tones and big (slightly tweaked) slow pounding beats characterise this modern yet underground sound that Mick Harris (aka Scorn) has made as his trademark. After a one minute intro, the standard snare sound on 'Can But Try' has a really tweaked snap to it, with all other elements likewise pushed to the extreme. With barely a melodic moment to be found on 'Still On', the track opts for sparse otherworldly sounds with combinations of kick, snare and high hat. Throughout the album there are a number of tracks that are presented in different versions, but some appear to be similar in name only (as is the case with 'Told you can tell: part 2'). A late album track, 'Closedown', achieves a mild groove to the crunchy beats, with smatterings of droning sounds hinting at a sparse tune that is book-ended by a quirky sporadic piece called 'Part Of' that, with a few segments of clanging cymbal abuse, works quite well. Rounding out the CD are a throw-away 11 second noise piece and a one minute outro beat, all in all another good album of darkly menacing drum and bass music.

The Seventh Dawn (Aus) "The Age to an End Shall Come..." CD 2000 Nile

This new project comes from none other than Chris McCarler (of Ikon infamy) and his sister Susan McCarler. Taking its cues from a neo folk perspective, the instrumentation (handied by Chris) consists of acoustic guitar ballads and folksy keyboard tracks. With Susan predominantly handling the vocals, the dreamy and restrained delivery helps evoke arcane visions that are particularly evident on baroquey styled 'He's not Playing for the King'. The minor piano keys of 'In Light and Roses' are fully embellished with orchestral layers, acoustic guitars, chimes and marching snare beats - this is also one of the few tracks to feature the vocals of Chris. Apart from being a fantastic song, overall this somewhat comparable to the composed works of Ordo Equilibrio whilst containing hints of Death in June (when it is stripped back to a lone trumpet, percussion and acoustic guitar). A slight diversion is toyed with on 'In my Lonely Hours', where the down vibe of the synth backing remains the same, despite the main focus arriving with programmed up tempo beats, rhythmic bass, and clanging keyboard tune. Whimsical atmospheres float gently from the speakers on '1881' as (again) lightly strummed acoustics and unassuming classically inspired keys swirl from background to foreground – Susan's vocals are a constant joy throughout. Almost aggressive, the final track 'The Rosin Bridge' holds a slightly ominous air, with a focus on heavier rolling beats while the darker melody is reflected in and enshrouded by the main vocals, again those of Chris. 10 tracks in all and housed in jewel case with a beautiful full colour cover, I would imagine this album would have the ability to appeal to a number of scenes ranging from industrial, neo-folk, gothic (or potentially even contemporary) given the sweet yet beautifully sorrowful compositions showcased here.

Skincage (USA) "Axon" CD 2000 Malignant Antibody

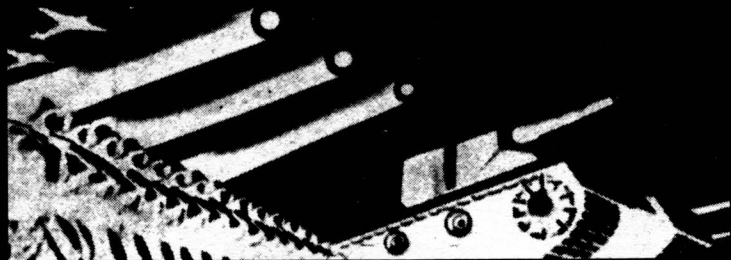
I must admit that I put off the task of reviewing this CD for some months. Essentially each time I listened to it I found my mind swimming in its multidimensional sonic whirlpool of sampled and re-contextualised sound, leaving me unable to transform the experience into words (well, now the time has finally come...). 'Axon' is the first release on the new Malignant Records side label; Malignant Antibody, which is run by none other than Phil Easter, creator of the sampled and manipulated sonic bliss of Stone Glass Steel and Iron Halo Device (as well as Malignant's web technician and Malignant Sound Technologies' knot twiddler). Immediately evident is the fact that Malignant Antibody highlights a certain focus and direction away from that of the main label, with this flagship release forging into quite cinematic sounding territories. Given that this is also the realm that Stone Glass Steel frequents, it is no surprise to hear that Skincage utilises a similar sampling and construction ethic inherent in S.G.S compositions, although Skincage approaches its musical aesthetic from a completely different angle to create a more subversive tone (for my interpretation, it could be the outward view gained from being trapped inside a decrepit society - much as the moniker suggests the operation of this idea on a much more personal scale). Akin to scanning radio bandwidth for signals, solo artist Jon Ray chops, splices and tweaks his way through myriads of samples - whether random noise, static, beats, rhythms, violins and whatever else you could possibly imagine. Brooding melodies, crumbly textures, aural clutter, machine pluses, hydraulic hisses, radio voices, modern diallings, sublime static, angelic vocals, resonating chimes, insectile scramblings, tribal percussion, telephone conversations, Gregorian chants - the list of samples that can be individually detected is simply endless. Yet even with providing such a list, it is less WHAT is being sampled than HOW it has been interpreted, collated and further manipulated to ingeniously engrossing effect. Assessing some of the pieces individually, 'Household Gods' (being central to the album) stands out prominently over the preceding tracks, due to its bizarre rhythm sequences and fleeting classical tunes. Horrific sounds intermixed with angelic voices and urgent orchestral blasts characterise 'Relapse', all wrapped in a very sharp and sonically crisp production which is exemplary of modern sound techniques. Later segments of this piece are more orchestrally sparse and generally less threatening in tone. With subversively subliminal packaging note suggesting that 'Struck by the Arrows of Artemis' be played on rotation, the darker hypnotic undercurrents are more likely to induce nightmares than to soothe, despite being balanced off with a prominent sample of a child's toy (now that I think about it, this element indicates more sinister implications). Anyway, with all the sampled calamity of most of the album, the final track 'The Bruised Mandala' seeps off into the distance as a fantastic soundscape of orchestral minimalism. Too composed and active ever to be considered dark ambient, yet at the same time not sufficiently composed to be bona fide songs,

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the finished album is a perfect example of 'cinematic isolationism'. Based on this debut release, I am expecting BIG things to come from both the artist and the label.

Silbernacht (Ger) "Nacht ohne Sterne" demo MC 2001 self released

Receiving this tape in the post, the letter introduced the material on this cassette as potentially being described as "...symphonic gothic or symphonic black. Sometimes it sounds like cinematic music". Well I can say that this sounded promising (or at the very least a little intriguing), but what you actually get with this 4 track/28 minute tape is rather bland and very synthetic sounding classical/organ oriented music. While there is a level of skill evident in the execution of the compositions, the actual music comes across as being uninspired, and as if the player has executed it with technical proficiency but forgotten to put any emotion into the playing. Selected pieces have a feel of soundtracks used in old horror movies (you know those with the slightly flamboyant yet gothically grounded organ dirges), but overall the music does not really contain a specific dark streak. Given that the tracks seem to simply meander along, there is no real hook nor focused direction to the material, and in many spots you are left feeling as if you've started reading a book midway through and attempting (unsuccessfully) to follow the storyline. Touches of swirling winds, and some more epic and grand keyboard notes bring to mind some of Moris's early works, yet it is the gothic slant to the sound that avoids Moris being used as a huge comparison. Maybe I'm being a bit too harsh, but when I reflect on this I really lack any specific feeling (be it love or loathe) hence the 'uninspired' comment. You decide. Available for \$5 US in Europe or \$10 US rest of world if interested contact: Frank Esser, Kempener Allee 108 D-47803 Krefeld, Germany.

Silk Saw (???) "4th Dividers" CD 2000 Ant-Zen

This is another artist on the Ant-Zen roster that I had not heard up until this item, and yet again presents another group that I want to become better acquainted with their back catalogue. Fitting into the trademark Ant-Zen 'Technoid' sound, the track dynamics are often structured around and slowly built on repetitive beat sequences that create clinical yet quite groovy, chilled-out sounds that have a certain ambient flair despite their composition. The snappy beats of 'Safe Area' are particularly infectious and make it hard not to be tapping along, as is also the case with 'No Twists No Turns' (but here a bigger throbbing bass sound is the main percussive element, with clicks, pops, chimes and the like making up the remainder). For some respite the treated, looped and manipulated guitar strums of 'Pave the Way' are the main focal point, resulting in quite a dark musical exploration without any use of percussive beats. 'Ratchet Mechanism' hints at a quirky source of inspiration despite the track being quite vertically rigid in its beat programming, and also marks the start of the second half of the album containing other similarly quirky and slightly more bizarre compositions (just reference 'Wrong Door' if you want to know what I mean!). With most of its 12 tracks ranging between 3 and 8 minutes, it results in quite a lengthy CD that explores the subtleties and dynamics of each composition.

Sleeping With The Earth (USA)/ Combat Astronomy (USA) "Split Compact Disc" CD 2000 Troniks

A rainstorm introduces the listener to Sleeping With The Earth; it is a deceptively organic tease. As rain batters and thunder erupts in violent peals, an undercurrent of malevolent, slashing noises (I hear voices amidst tortured machinery) rises to overwhelm the torrential downfall, meshing to make a more potent assimilation of said rainstorm. Ultra-manipulated voices (I think it's voices—it might just be noise incoherently screaming amidst slaughter...), distorted into shades of thunder that shred like talons of metal, gleefully rip at the organic base, mangled sounds dispersed in tattered sheets of inflamed metal and gouged flesh. A brilliant introduction to the meticulously designed dynamics utilized by Sleeping With The Earth. "Deliver Us From Evil" slowly ascends from depths unknown, a black mass marching on the heels of the song's wary sonic navigator... Release is never attained; one is left with an impression much like an itch unscratched. "What Have I Done?" plods unmercifully through fields of ground bone and gristle, a death

march of low rumbling, monotonously rippling distortion punctured by clattering knives (...think Brighter Death Now, circa Necrose Evangelicum). Powerful stuff, exquisitely presented; even amidst the fury unleashed here, there always seems a purpose (well, except maybe the mutual masturbation of the Big Tex assisted "This Is My Room," a still amusing affair that gains quite a bit of sonic mass as it evolves). Combat Astronomy commences with a sound like skin being ripped off the hide of an android. As "Tiat02" unravels, murky sub-currents of grime are beaten on with metal pipes that assume a ratcheted rhythm. Though maybe less focused than Sleeping With The Earth, Combat Astronomy utilize a variety of noisy approaches in the manufacturing of their mayhem. Subterranean loops of blood surge through iron veins, clotting in a diseased artery crushed in metal (hence, the clanking metal din) on "J-Vax.". A percussive loop is splattered with progressively more caustic abrasions during "NOMAN." "Hu!" sounds like the laughter of looped, cut and splice, hiccupping machinery, while an avalanche of sonic discord tumbles through the belly of a white noise tornado during "Archon." Seventy minutes of maliciously rendered abuse! I look forward to more from both of these artists. ...—JC Smith

The Soil Bleeds Black (USA) "Quintessence" CD 2001 World Serpent Distribution

Representing the fifth album, it seems the Riddick brothers have further re-evaluated and refined their approach of neo-medieval folk music, and in my ears this is their strongest recorded work to date. Shunning the shorter pieces and soundscape interludes, these tracks embody a much longer length and are predominantly built around darkened acoustic guitar ballads. Likewise the actual vibe of this CD is much more morose and melancholic with less emphasis on the whimsical yet ridged minstrel type atmospheres of prior recordings with an improved flow. The male vocals have also gone through a slight stylistic change, where rather than presenting caricatures, here they are quite simply and clearly sung (and as always complimented with the vocals of Eugenia Houston). Basing the album around five tracks ('earthe', 'air', 'fyr', 'water' & 'quintessence') the first track a brooding piece of acoustic guitar sentimentality is embellished with various percussive elements, wood wind instruments and even a trumpet. The darker acoustic folk tangent of 'air' uses the Eugenia's voice as the vocal lead whilst xylophone, recorder, stately drums, church bells and trumpet all add to the foreboding atmosphere. The cyclic and repetitive guitar strumming of 'fyr' brings to mind selected tracks of Ordo (Rosarius) Equilibrio, yet the embellishing of woodwind instruments, percussion, marching beats etc creates a fantastic and individualistic celebratory flavour—both male and female vocals presented in unison. With a minimalist ambient introduction, 'water' falls back into morose acoustic musing territory, that is both subdued and epic. Again elements of drum and wood percussion, synth layers, recorders, whistles etc make up the backing, providing the basis for dual male female vocals that are used as both backing and lead (ranging from soaring to chanting). Final track 'quintessence' again embodies the morose acoustic guitar style and is some 15 minutes in length. With the percussion presenting heavy slow pounding beats and multi layered woodwind instruments it presents the perfect basis for the Eugenia's vocals, with the lyrics being noted to being an ode of the four elements referenced in the first four tracks. After the five minute mark, the track falls away into a rather engaging dark ambient soundscape, presenting an aura of being in lost in a dark woodland during the middle ages, that later makes way for a hidden track. This instrumental piece is yet another fantastic acoustic guitar track (I can say I have always been a sucker for acoustic folk guitar tunes) that sees the multi layered guitar along with percussion, woodwind tunes, dulcimer and even a stunning trumpet interlude. This album is easily the pinnacle of what the TSBB have recorded to date and now sees the group further aligning themselves with the current neo-folk movement where particular comparison to the like of Ataxia can be made. 'Quintessence' will certainly not disappoint established fans of the group, but will also create an opportunity for those who might not have been totally enamoured with previous albums to rediscover the group via the gem that is this album.

Somatic Responses (UK) "augmented lines" CD 2001 Hymen

With the bio stating this is the second CD release for Somatic Responses, this is however is my first introduction to the group. Mixing elements of drum'n'bass, break beats and darker aspects of electronic experimentalism, this has resulted in a complexly twisted listen. Amazingly atmospheric, 'rnb' utilises an undercurrent of shimmering drones that are overlaid with sharp and puncturing beat and groove arrangements, which highlighting a key characteristic of the album. Using this aspect of dual layers in the creation of the compositions, it has created quite an engaging listen. Essentially each element of beats or tuneful undercurrent could stand on their own, yet it is when they are mixed together that it is a truly great listening experience. 'Automata (sonic empire)' being a composition of slamming mid paced beats and noise treatments, there is an always delectable, subdued & partly tuneful drone melody. The more frantic programmed beats of 'catacombs' surge the piece forward, yet grounding it with the dark twist of the brooding melody (that partially hints at the style of Beefcake). The fantastically titled 'perfumed ammo' provides enough deadly and sweet sentiments with its cranking beats and wispy tones, that sweep along through a myriad of morphed segments. A ridged and complex drum'n'bass style is utilised on 'critical path' with its rather direct and sharp approach that only becomes heavier and more distorted as the piece progresses. Again exploiting the dual composition focus to maximum effect, the moody tune textures of 'u.d.' is mixed alongside fractured and fast paced freeform beat structures creating a aural panoramic vision. Ominous synth tunes of 'cs bastardo' takes centre stage prior to a dense and fast paced beat cranks things up a notch and gradually dragging the composition into noise and distortion obliteration. The final track 'engines of desire' is a rather catchy composition with pulsating rhythms and blips sandwiched in with mid-paced beat programming and atmospheric tone for a sense of completion. In conclusion, whilst less classical/orchestral in orientation than label mates Beefcake, this does share similarities in the actual break beat composition framework and wide screen sweeping musical backing, thus subsequently this gets my tick of approval of being another impressive release from the Hymen camp.

SONA EAST (Bel) Hypnoskull (Bel) tunnel (Bel) "fucked by others' attitudes" 7" picture disc ep 2001 Nocturnus

Delving into 'shake your booty' territory, the three projects that inhabit this release all embody a heavy rhythmic noise approach (think industrial strength techno—or even technoise) and are incidentally all projects of one Patrick Stevens. Further noting that the vinyl 7" plays at 33 rpm at least this ensures maximum play time for the three compositions that are presented herein. SONA EAST are up first

with their track 'the external inputphase', that uses a grinding analogue drone introduction, prior to the track quickly leaping into an extremely heavy mid paced beat. With a searing metallic resonance its basic structure is set in stone, using a repetitive framework to drive its message home (with a short interlude in the middle the track quickly stomps back in for one final rhythmic rotation). HypnoSkull on the other hand up the speed just slightly on 'push>eject>return', with a slightly muffled yet no less weighty programming. With the basic structure set, the piece is tweaked, twisted and generally fucked with, likewise including machine gun blasting noise. Some sort of bizarrely morph vocal snippet jumps in at random moments (never to actually be deciphered) as the track continues on its short, sharp and HEAVY delivery - that is incidentally credited as being a live recording. By virtue of submitting a lengthier track, tunnel get a side to themselves (which is a project between Patrick and his wife Meike) to present their piece 'I know your attitude'. Opening with slightly distorted and cynically delivered female vocals that are retained throughout the track, alongside a muffled fast-paced programmed beat. With the programmed sequence of the track being slightly more complex than those on side A, on face value there appears to be more movement with this piece particularly as further noise and sound layers are added and tweaked over a longer time span. However to get to the crux of the matter this is yet another addictive beat oriented track. Overall the three tracks presented all use a weighty and direct approach to their dance floor oriented noise anthems that work particularly cohesively as part of this vinyl.

Sophia (Swe) "Sophia" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industry

Encompassing a side project of Peter Pettersson (aka, the male half of Arcana) you would immediately know this is going to be a project worthy of a listen. While there is a certain song writing style and sound that hints at Peter's work from his main project, here the orchestral and neo-classical hymns come in a much heavier, martial and aggressive guise. The sweeping orchestral melodies are kept relatively harsh and commanding due to a heavy reliance on brass instrumentation, while the ever-present booming tympani and snare percussion resembles the thousand footfalls of a charging army. Intermixed with the massive orchestral tracks are less musical ones that work more on the premise of illustrating windswept soundscapes of a recently deserted battle field. These subdued tracks break up the album in a very positive way - they work well on their own whilst bolstering the epic mood of more composed numbers, much like the bridging tracks on Turburt Sturmwerk's 'Weltenbrand' CD. 'Sigillum Militum XI' deserves a mention on its own as the building atmosphere it encompasses is very reminiscent of the constantly building aura of In Slaughter Natives 'Purgate my Stain' CD (the following track yet another all out brass and snare percussive battle hymn that towards the end sinks into a morose french horn tune). With massive tympani percussion echoing and resonating as if it was recording in an underground cavern, 'Sigillum Militum XIII' enshrines its only tune within the stunning multi layered, deep Gregorian chants of Peter - and given the atmosphere the vocals generate they are really a reevaluation unto themselves. The last track opting for another windswept soundscape integrates clanging church bells and far off martial percussion signalling the end whilst illustrating to my minds eye the victors striding off into the distance (a sparse and mellow piano tune takes up the final gasping minutes). The only complaint I could really raise in relation to this album (as has been my complaint with all of the Arcana albums thus far) is that, at a touch over 40 minutes, it is simply too short and leaves me wanting more.

Stone Glass Steel (USA) "corruption/ redemption" 10" EP 2001 Spectre

Well, Spectre's lunacy continues with this release (part of the 10 x 10" EP series with each item in the series limited to 100), particularly as this 10" vinyl is housed between two steel plates that are held together with by metal nuts welded into place. Additionally the printed cover sheets are glued to the face surfaces of the metal, whereby a rectangular piece of glass has been further attached over the SGS logo. And with the 'glass' and 'steel' and elements represented, it is the image of a concrete wall/ drain depicted on the cover that encapsulates the 'stone' element of the package's concept. Basically this has easily created one of the most impressively packaged items that I own, made all the more sweeter considering it is a SGS release (particularly as new SGS material has been rather light on the ground in the past few years). With Phil Easter (aka eyespark) at the helm, he has taken a topical issue from the TUMORlist e-group and used this for inspiration of one of the tracks. Some time back when a discussion raged over whether or not the orchestral derived keyboard sounds presented an authentic enough sound, this inspired Phil to record a track using only samples derived from actual classical/orchestra recordings. Well, 'corruption' is the final result, with this piece being rather astounding as it sounds as if all elements were recorded specifically for this composition and not collated in a cut and paste method. With shrill strings, ominous brass instrumentation (and every other orchestral sound you care to name), the track swings effortlessly through urgent passages, to layers of brooding atmospheres, to subdued romantic sentimentalities. Without having any sort of scattered cut up sound to the final production, 'corruption' comes across like a very modern and experimental orchestra composition by virtue of it being seamlessly spliced together. Without it ever sounding disjointed or messy, it simply speaks leagues of Phil's ability to be able to take an idea and bring it fruition with stunning result. On the flip side the track is more typical of SGS - but then again what is typical when considering the diversity of sound that has been previously presented under this banner? Anyway, 'redemption' takes on a framework of throbbing bass, and multi layered sounds ranging from the shrill to the subdued - yet incidentally it is these quasi string elements that enables the track to achieve coherence with the track on the opposing side, despite sounding completely different. Heavy percussive sounds increase the pace of the track to a quick trot, as the varying layers morph into increasingly free form structures. With the track both grounded with bass and percussion yet evoking emotive and atmospheric elements with the higher-toned layers, this is certainly SGS back in fine form. Not to end there, when the deep structural sounds are later removed, it enables the track to evolve into a sparsely shifting soundscape with wide screen cinematic scope prior to a chugging rhythmic pulse and plodding beat drawing together the far reaches of the track to morph it into its chaotic and noisy conclusion. If the above sounds too analytical, it is due to the sheer complexity that SGS compositions contain, ensuring the reviewers task is a rather difficult one - as I can certainly attest. Notwithstanding, this is an absolutely stunning release, but with this item being sold out prior to its official release I don't like your chances of securing a copy of your own.

Stratvm Terror (Swe) "Genetic Implosion" CD 2000 Old Europa Café

The third Stratvm Terror CD (two Old Europa Café releases-Pariah Demise and this one-sandwiching the excellent Pain Implantations, from Malignant) is a slathering, noisy affair drenched in moist feedback and much controlled chaos, more directly noisy than either of the previous discs. As constructed by The Master, Peter Andersson (if you do not already know who he is, your CD collection is sorely lacking...), and Tobias Larsson, Genetic Implosion is an exercise in sonic disarray of the highest standards. "Uranium" opens the proceedings with the slow ascent of compressed factory platter amidst flames that voraciously lick at the swiftly charring hide. The tones are at first reminiscent of the shifting of tectonic plates that Peter has utilized in some of his other projects (specifically, Raison D'Etre, circa In Sadness, Silence And Solitude, as well as "Safehold" from Death Odors II), a kind of slow erosion of the earth from within. But the force and ferocity in which the flames devour (flames-actually, this may be more indicative of the radioactive burn of the uranium of the song's title... maybe...), recorded at such close range, withers the weak: it is a molten flood that sings to the marrow. It is the ambience of noise (not power electronics, nor dark sonicscape, per se, more the

middle ground... where I'd like to hear more bands explore-reference Dagda Mor's The Border Of The Light as a prime example of where I am coming from), honed to perfection. Metal bends and screeches during "Static Systematic Cloning," the stentorian machinery moan birthing razor sharp tentacles of searing feedback in the process. "Cox" surges and crackles amidst more factory clatter, the pulsing undercurrent signifying life amidst the sonic discord. "Bleeding" gushes forth from the sonic wound, more of the ever-present caterwauling feedback lashing with malicious intent (a virulent cobra strike) amidst distressed samples. The final three tracks on the disc were recorded live at the Nursery Festival in Stockholm, Sweden, during June of 1998. Though not quite as sonically dense (which may just be live production versus studio production), these tracks still rage with earnest, frothing glee. Bony fingers scratch rusted metal during "Swelter Deformation," building in intensity as flaking limbers dig frayed fingernails into the mounting sonic melee; this bleeds into "Gore," a frothing denouement of ragged percussion amidst agitated metallic squalor. Unquestionably one of 2000's finest releases. As with all of Peter Andersson's endeavors-Mandatory! -JC Smith

STROM.ec (Fin) "Dogs Of Total Order" CD 2000 Freak Animal Records

Radioactive ambience infused with irritably rusting, static-drenched pulsating noise fries my speakers (and the hairs on my arms) as the incendiary agenda of Finland's most malicious export, Strom.ec, is aligned on the introductory track, "Neuroscan." As accompanied by doused in gasoline and set on fire vocals, the relentless, steamroller dynamics are fused into a surly amalgamation of no frills power electronics. Ricochet metal percussion is drowned in reverb washed vocals and precision machinery squeal, an exercise in disorientation, during "General Enemy." Crematorium scorched white noise and harsh, rabid (desperate...) vocals ignite "Can You See The Light," while the body of one being burned alive bounds haphazardly about, blackened bones beating on the unforgiving walls, a flailing percussion procured from within the molten, skin-melting embrace. The distorted loops that open "Pillhead" are straight out of Deutsch Nepal's abundant reserve, but the sound that corrodes them is abusive, a flurry of convoluted noise skirmishes, humming base tonalities and the sparse vocals cranked to demonstrative rage. A rippling screech of sound, like the wailing of a prehistoric siren, is decimated by gurgling feedback and vocals that, for all intents and purpose, eagerly gnaw at the bone and sinew of the charred body of sound, ambushed by the sheer ferocity of vitriolic expression. Through the freewheeling use of noise, as well as a prominent incorporation of reverb, STROM.ec acknowledge their industrial forefathers, while forging their own brand of intense power electronics. An upcoming release on the Malignant side-label Black Plague should further their status as one of the preeminent purveyors of power electronics fury. -JC Smith

Strom.ec (Fin) "Glass Cage" 7" EP 2000 Kaos Kontrol

Highly acclaimed Finnish project Strom.ec return after their successful debut CD (reviewed above) with a vinyl offering of 3 live tracks recorded either in August 1998 or July 2000. With massively chugging power electronic looped rhythms with spiteful and fully distorted vocals bled into the mix, 'in a glass cage' is a fantastically punishing and aggressive in manner. Second track 'hypnosis' sees a diversion away from the pure death industrial power electronics with a programmed almost techno styled rhythm, however underlying noise and spoken/echoed vocals retain a heavy and intense flavour. Side B contains a lengthy single track 'you or them' is a brooding offering of mid ranged static and distortion. Things do solidify for a minute or two in via looped noise of flame-thrower like intensity. Radio voices are detectable sporadically in-between the looping framework of loud noise (or even louder noise) and for this reason alone this sounds most like it would have been a partly improvised live recording. A worthy item if the CD was to your liking.

Sturmovik (Ger) "Feldweihne" LP 2000 Tesco Organisation

Sturmovik's debut album being built on what sounds like deep orchestral melodies, it is as if these have been further burned under tons of concrete and steel, giving a very muffled and distant (not to mention distinct) aura - and, mind you, this is said in the most positive of lights. Alternate intermixed elements also include metallic scrapings, noises, radio voices/samples evoking comparisons to subdued noise industrial material. 'Stahlhauch' (the second track) is a perfect example of this orchestral/industrial mixture by thrumming rhythmic looped noise, subdued yet slightly searing texture, radio vocals and a slow evolving classical melody. An all out World War II atmosphere is toyed with on 'Volk im Feuer', which comprises threatening rhythms, static, and the sound of low flying bombers. It is quite difficult to find words to describe the depths of the orchestral melody on 'Schicksalsweg', yet the other elements of jumbled snippets of radio voices, songs and martial drumming build the piece to a chaotic conclusion. Battle tank clatter and atmospheres of full scale trench warfare (including bombers swooping close overhead) introduces 'Sonnengefecht', with these sounds giving way to a fantastic sampled and looped classical melody to conclude the first side of the LP. The title track opens side B with an extremely hefty rhythmic noise loop and martial percussive element, with the latter soon becoming the focal point. Shifting through a few other passages of rhythmic experimentation (all with a WWII aura of course), 'Feldweihne' abruptly stalls to make way for 'Der Toten Ruhe', a rather crushing mixture of orchestral and chanted choir layers compacted under a corroding slab of noise. The martial battle hymn evoked through a clear melody and percussion indicates that 'Gluhende Front' is not all that far removed from what Der Blutbarosh produced on his debut full length. The final track, 'Davon Geht Die Welt Nicht Unter', opts for a subtle exit, slinking away with slow subdued loops, scattered vocals samples and fleeting segments of orchestral sound (a 1940s-era music hall recording can be detected in the dying moments). Whilst the cover might be a simplistic slip sleeve, this is, as with all Tesco vinyl releases, presented with immaculate layout and quality card stock to capture that special 'Tesco' aura. Destined to be a much sought after rarity - that I am quite sure of.

SubArachnoid Space (USA) "These Things Take Time" CD 2000 Release Entertainment

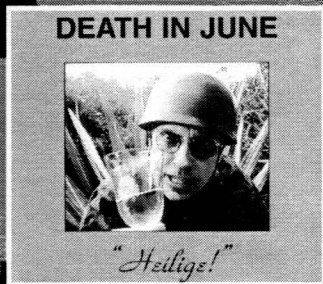
House of Low Culture is a guitar-oriented project that is nevertheless very much at the experimental end of the spectrum in regard to its finished product. On the other hand, Sub Arachnoid Space is very much a guitar band and sounds like a band proper, yet by approaching their compositions from a sweeping, improvised perspective, they ultimately end up creating quite a hallucinogenic journey. It is even more amazing to read that this release was recorded during a live to air performance that is partly evident in the music, which takes a sparse and loose framework of each instrument, then melds them into a completed composition. In regard to the musical direction, it is interesting to note that this is more firmly rooted with the meandering bass melody and atmospherically flexible mid paced drums, while the guitar creates sparse roaming tunes that are more often than not enshrined in swirling feedback and drawn out organ notes. Despite mostly sounding like a group of musicians in a band format, it is quite easy to find yourself swept up in the trance-like atmosphere and transported off into the often untapped cavities of your own mind, only assisted by the fact that the 7 untitled tracks ('A' through 'G' titles) merge into each other, never really giving the listener a hint as to where one piece finishes and the next begins. Given the 'band' oriented sound of this album, this may not appeal to all fans of the types of sounds that Spectrum generally covers, but I have found this to be a refreshingly great album that has been a nice diversion from the multitude of similar albums that I receive for review.

NEROZ



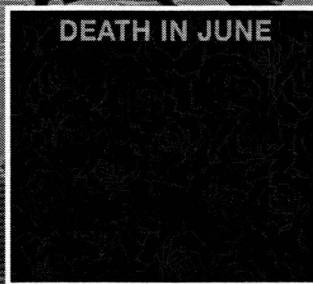
DEATH IN JUNE
**Take Care
And Control**
CD NEROZ 42

The original Australian version featuring the extra track 'Circo Massimo' plus now a remixed version of 'Little Blue Butterfly'. The first collaboration between Douglas P. and Albin Julius. Cleansed!



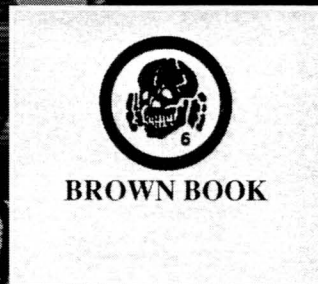
DEATH IN JUNE
Heilige!
CD NEROZ 43

20 live tracks to celebrate the final performance of the 20th Century. Comes in a spot varnished digipak sleeve. Thunderous!



DEATH IN JUNE
**The World
That Summer**
CD BADVC CD9

The original 1986 vinyl recordings digitally remastered and for the first time featured on CD. This was the initial album that saw Douglas P. working as the only official member of Death In June. The digipak is spot varnished with roses, foil blocked and includes extra photos from that period. Beautiful!



DEATH IN JUNE
Brown Book
CD BADVC CD11

1987's classic and controversial follow up to 'The World That Summer'. The original vinyl recordings, plus 3 extra tracks, digitally remastered and featured for the first time on CD. The digipak is embossed, foil blocked and contains rare promotional pictures and text from that era. Superb!

COMING SOON: BOYD RICE AND FIENDS Wolf Pact

13 tracks. 13 days. 13 wishes. The ultimate new work between Boyd Rice, Douglas P. and Albin Julius. Unique!

Other DEATH IN JUNE material, or material by Ikon and related projects may also be in stock - so why not ask?

NEROZ P.O.Box 277 Flemington Victoria 3031 Australia
fax: +613 9382 0310 email: commanderxxx@hotmail.com

Substanz t (Ger) "tripped experiences" CD 2001 Hymen

While containing that certain accessibility that most Hymen releases embody, this release is even more focused and a commercial tip with vocalist contributions on a number of pieces, but thankfully this has not been traded off by removing the deeper brooding intelligent compositions. Working on one level with a break beats infused trip hop style and on the other with minimalist drone oriented melodies there is a lot to discover and explore. 'Nexus' launches Substanz t's third album - a sleek blend of trip hop breaks, whispered vocals and exquisitely haunting ambient synth melodies. 'Really Good' shifts with a mid-paced bass driven guise, and crisp echoed beat structures. Again there is no escape from the slowly chilled trance melodies. Increasingly complex, the breaks become driving, as do the tuneful elements. 'Le contact de la voix' is the for the most part one of the most focused pieces with the beats and programming yet lacks the underlying brooding elements which make the preceding tracks so exceptional. Incorporating mildly funky bass lines and focused beats, this is quite club oriented, but for my personal tastes is not as strong as other pieces. With what could be described as galactic programming sounds, 'new-u' takes lethargic flight held aloft by lightly yet understated female vocals. Shifting the beats from subdued to focused breaks it enhances the mood to no end, with the deeper synth sounds reappearing. 'Was it god' with its heavy beat, and trip hop focus, includes a rap MC vocal contribution which itself is not entirely bad, however isn't so impressive as to be indispensable. 'Unique' on the other hand has a fantastic sparsity with sustained synth textures and sounds with slow non-distracting bass/beat programming - vocals likewise subdued being presented in the form of a low whisper. Melancholic trip hop, with drone like melody and mild breaks ensures that 'Hypnotised by bee' floats along unassumingly, whilst presenting visions of cold urbanism. Particularly impressive is the minimalist & forlorn piano line used late in the piece merges classical and cutting edge sounds given the track a somewhat timeless aura even despite the framing break beats. 'SOLution' with its prominent snappy breaks and urgent beat programming, these are offset against moody synth textures and angelic female backing vocals. By way of a plodding bass melody and slow plucked guitar tune the mood of 'black' is a morose yet atmospheric one, only grounded by the straight forward kit & symbol percussion. The closing piece 'unite' chooses a lounge type vibe with sprinkled keyboard noodling, that has slight misgivings about until the track builds out with snappy kit/percussion beats of hip hop flair (groove oriented indeed). Those of you who have purchased material from this label would have a good idea of what to expect from this, with this being a rather pleasant diversion from other sonic weight that my ears are regularly subjected to.

Sutcliffe Jugend (Eng) "XI" 7"EP 2000 Death Factory

Side V contains two tracks, or what seems like two tracks; there seems a distinct break between segments at least, and since there are no track titles listed...well... The first track is doused in nausea drenched vocals, rubbery, upon which the lash of abusive percussion smacks the soft gray matter of a demented, legion of maniacs, hive mind. This succumbs to a looped ambience that cruises along darkened streets and through back alleys, as fingernails of dread existence (aligned by insidious motives, insidious desires...) scratch at the back of the cranial cellar. The second track (or second half?) is an eruption of bleached insanity power electronics, lubricated, lists of nails noise that shreds an unwilling orifice as unintelligible vocals deliriously expound teeth grinding gibberish. (Whew!) The silence that follows is pierced by what sounds like some searing loon (be it 1. A fish eating, diving bird or 2. A crazy person...) off in the distance. Weird, and subtly disturbing. VI continues along a similar path, successfully lulling the listener into a state of anticipation via ground bones ambience that simmers uncomfortably, the tension growing progressively more prominent until an abrupt thrust of needles into the tympanum (in the ear) rattles all thought amidst the high-pitched attack. And yet, it all has the essence of control, restraint, and the unmitigated joy in torture. Control is annihilated towards the end as a regurgitative flow of truly sick vocal administrations is unleashed, vomituous lides in line with what the deranged, drooling occupant of an insane asylum might spew. Some of the best work Sutcliffe Jugend have yet to produce, convincingly powerful documents of unfettered lunacy. -JC Smith

Sunn O))) (USA) "The Grimmer Demos" CD 2000 Double H Noise Industries (2xHNI)

With what appears to be only bass and guitar used for this recording, it is quite difficult to find words that might adequately describe the sonic weight and intensity captured in these sub-bass drones and harmonics. Sunn O))) present what are essentially guitar compositions, yet ones that are played at such a lethargic pace while the overriding guttural distortion creates a drone-oriented framework that is at some remove from a typical 'band' format (from this perspective, the liner notes description of the music as 'doom-power-ambient-drone-involution' is spot on the mark). The CD's 3 tracks still clock in at just short of 45 minutes, further highlighting the almost catatonic pace of playing. Likewise, often hidden under the weighty, down-tuned bass and guitar drone elements are distant and atmospheric guitar riffs and other general noodlings that work to add more fleeting layered elements to the otherwise crushing tonal textures. As for the main melodies of the songs, these are quite deceiving and difficult to grasp due to their slow pace. Basically the tracks drag you along on their individual journeys, where only a few preceding musical notes are remembered. Essentially this prevents the overall song structure from being deciphered in its entirety, suggesting that the tonal harmonics are the main identifiable musical element. Whilst you can certainly hear the guitar/bass elements on these tracks, clearly the style and focus of the actual playing allows you to transcend 'listening' to these elements as you normally would. I must admit that at first I was a little apprehensive about the project, simply due to its 'guitar' orientation; but after hearing Sunn O))) I am thoroughly glad that I have. For a very broad comparison this might be like a beelied up and slowed down concoction of the heaviest elements of Novatron. The cover is also damn fantastic in imagery and presentation, consisting of a trifold heavy card sleeve with separate card band to hold the CD in place.

Sunn O))) (USA) "OO VOID" CD 2000 Double H Noise Industries (2xHNI)

With this second album for the power ambient drone doomsters Sunn O))), on 'OOVoid' (and likewise to partake in a bit of name dropping) the album was recorded under the guidance and direction of one time Kyuss bassist Scott Reader (and anyone who knows Kyuss will know the guttural stoner rock base sound they are renowned for) making Scott an obvious choice to consult regarding heavy bass oriented production. On this album the same style, framework and direction as the debut CD is clearly followed; however, when translated through Scott Reader's production, it has created a guitar power drone framework where each instrument layer is both cleaner and even more guttural and ominous than before. The same goes for the higher end layers, that achieve a greater level of atmospherics when they are fleetingly used. With 4 track presented to illustrate the 'OOVoid', the album achieves a play time of just short of 60 minutes, with the pace of the tracks akin to watching a piece of dead flesh slowly shrivelling under the incessant attack of the blazing sun (or Sunn O))) in this case). Interestingly, one of the four compositions ('Fabbles' Revenge) is actually a Melvin's cover - not that you would ever recognise it as such, again due to the song's morphed transformation into a guitar drone soundscape (with hints of percussion to be sparsely detected in the backing of this track). The cover of this (a standard jewel case) might not be quite as special as 'The Grimmer Demos', however the graphic art does make up for this. I can also say that I was rather surprised to see an excerpt from the William H. Gass novel *The Tunnel* quoted on the cover, yet given the absolute desolation and desperation it conveys it certainly does set a similar mood to that of the music. In conclusion, either of the Sunn O))) releases would be a recommended starting point as both have their

particular charms in relation to sound and presentation.

Terra Sancta (Aus) "Anno Domini 2000" MCDR 2000 Terra Sancta

For a debut recording this is a surprisingly strong work that suitably aligns itself with the early to mid sound of the infamous Cold Meat Industry label (with the sole project member incidentally also being a CMI list member). Terra Sancta takes its cue from stunning acts like Raison d'être and Desiderii Marginis, which is less a criticism of plagiarism than an indicator of the depth and maturity that has been achieved on this first official recording. I even feel that any of these tracks would have nestled perfectly into the line-up of either of the two now legendary 'Death Odours' CDs released on Slaughter Productions. Three lengthy tracks span the 32 minutes of music mixing sparse textural soundscapes, deathly drawn out keyboard melodies and emutterings of sampled (predominantly female) choir vocals. Depth and sparseness are used positively as compositional elements, and are particularly noteworthy when a sorrowful (sampled) violin tune rises briefly out of the depressive undercurrent of the first piece, 'Desert Earth' (late in the piece the sparse textural elements take on the guise of searing desert winds whipping up a blinding sandstorm). 'The Infinite Lurking' is not as gentle as the title may suggest, and commences calmly with multi layered choir vocals before fierce mid-ranged layers arc into the composition (illustrating the final death throes perhaps?). Things do calm down again, but only very briefly before massive drawn out keyboard drones and catatonic melodies commandingly stride into contention and remain for the majority of the piece. A Middle Eastern flavour is apparent on 'Lithified' with a (again sampled) wind instrument melody that gives way to a mid-ranged slow keyboard tune (evoking a distant mournful aura) set against sounds of slowly dripping water and other assorted field-type recordings. The only other point I can make is that, while there is no complaint with the sound and production, I get the feeling that a good bit of mastering work on this recording would have assisted in further evolving it from great to brilliant (but, all things considered, this is a minor point). I will admit that I have constantly whined about the lack of quality Australian acts that align themselves with Spectrum's content, but at least now a few noteworthy projects are beginning to surface. Contact: terra_sancta@hotmail.com,

This Empty Flow (Fin) "Nowafter" CD 2001 Eibon Records

With the bio stating that this is to be filed under 'dark', it is not much of lead to go on, but further on, when it references the Cure and Pink Floyd as musical reference points it sparks intrigue. Anyway, after having given this CD a wealth of listens, I can say that I don't entirely agree with providing merely two musical reference points. Rather I'd lump massive amounts of praise on this by saying that it is an absolutely astounding album by further incorporating elements of how Portishead and Radiohead approach their song writing and production. Musically diverse, instrumentally intricate, and stunningly written, each track is leagues apart from the next, yet there is still a perfect cohesion to the dark musical streak that interweaves all elements into a full album. From the quirky electronic/pop/rock of the album opener 'Jen(Ni)' 'Force', it sets the scene for something quite different for both Eibon Records and the underground scene in general. The wide screen musical aesthetic of 'marmite' certainly brings to mind some of the most depressive moments of Radiohead, here the with the mellow tune seething out into the bleak horizon. The quirky pop of 'Stilton' is only made more bizarre by the high pitched male vocals, as the track swings along with programmed drums and left field guitar melodies. Another touch of Radiohead melancholia is employed on 'shoreditche' and when it eventually breaks its tethers, this track really takes flight in wide upward spirals. With a bleak organ dirge, driving bass and xylophone tune, things couldn't get weirder on 'and also the drops' until the vocals (both lead and backing) are presented with a flamboyant air akin to those of David Bowie - and by all accounts none of this should work, but does in stunningly superb fashion. On 'one song about solitude', the Cure reference can be seen clearer than on any track preceding it - here the slow kit drumming having a beautiful cavernous echo, as fragile morose vocals bleed their themes over a tune of plodding bass and subdued keys (and if you were to wallow in melancholy the last half of this track would be the perfect accompaniment....). The slinky bass and kit percussion driven dub type atmosphere has a Portishead touch to it, but obviously the male vocals and other touches of depressive guitar, synth and piano lines have given this a life and character of its own. With the intricate opening guitar lines of 'Drops' can't help but be reminded of Katatonia's recent musical approach, but this takes that atmosphere up a fair few notches when it kicks in with a full compliment of guitars, drums and clean vocals, all generating a sweetly sorrowful sound that meanders forward effortlessly increasing with passion and emotion. Returning to a Cure-esque aura on 'Angel's Playground' the drawn out drums, synths and vocals create the bed on which the mournful lone guitar line reclines upon ('Hunger' likewise plays out is very comparable format). In terms of background to this album, it does not represent the first for the group, rather a release that includes new tracks, as well as tracks lifted of an earlier album and limited promotional CD. (To my ear the early album tracks of quirky yet dark pop/electronic nature constitute the most recent recordings, whilst the latter portion of the album encompass the more subdued depressive compositions - those being the earlier works). Despite the subtly detectable differences in recording styles between tracks, the overall re-mastering has presented a release that works as if it were always intended to be the one album. Lastly, if there were any release of this issue to be able to crossover to the mainstream and make it big, clearly this is it (and partly due to this encompassing a more palatable band framework). Nonetheless I will say that Eibon are by no means exaggerating when they claim This Empty Flow is one of the greatest undiscovered bands on the planet.

Tribe of Circle (Fra) "Rien ne disparaît jamais vraiment..." CD 2000 Athanor

Athanor have come up with the goods again by releasing the debut album of this group (after a 7" on Hau Ruk that I am yet to hear). To begin with, the primary 'tool' used by this project in the creation and categorisation of their sound is the looping of segments of music which, depending on what is sampled, alters the focus and style of the sound. A short military tattoo-type bagpipe tune (including bodhran percussion) introduces the album followed by 'When tears turn into solidarity' that melds a short looped female vocal and deeper solid loops, heavy noise and unusual percussive sounds gradually meld into a loose driving collage. The metallic clanks, aggressive scrapping sounds, choir-like textures and crushing percussion of 'Colours of Europa' each introduce themselves at different points gradually building on what the previous loop had brought forward, yet things take a stunning twist when a highly rousing orchestral loop (comprising of horn and string section) leaps from the speakers mid song and takes the forefront for the reminder of the track in simply stunning fashion. Deep ritual sounds and shrill orchestral textures ensures that 'Evil is a point of view' (I assume this would have to be a tongue in cheek title) is an emotionally unnerving listen, that in shades brings to mind Raison d'être due to the desolate tones of the sampled choir vocals. 'In this Land' redefines driving percussion via its presentation of incessant mid ranged looping floor tom rolls, underscored with more spare sound textures and bass melody (but never really becoming tuneful) in a sort of old school industrial fashion. Continuing in similar vibe (in a vague round about way) 'Coranic Submission' infuses rousing crowd noise and whip crack beat (an ode to Death in France perhaps considering Douglas P is greeted on the cover). Title track and concluding piece, packs a fair punch mixing a ritual/martial/neo-classical loops into a crushing blend, with one segment revealing the unnerving sound of a pulse monitor cutting out only to hear spiteful laughter echoing off in the backing. Vocal chants, screams and German speech samples further add to this unnerving chaotic air, opting to shake the listener right to the last minutes of the album (only for a sampled merry go round carnival tune to appear in the dying seconds

- simply weird). Of this group I can say that I had previously heard comparisons made to the likes of Deutsch Nepal (in relation to the sound loops) and Der Blutharsch (in relation to the orchestral/militant sound), both of which I would agree with entirely. Apart from the quality of the music the brown and sepia tones of the digi pack cap this off as an extremely solid debut album.

Trifid Project (Wid) "Trifid Project (featuring: james plotkin, matthieu, shella mata, yves & marie dauber)" MCD 2001 Vacuum

Quirky, very experimental and tripped out, this multi-collaborational project revolves around the electronic end of the musical spectrum. Complex beat/blip sequences introduce the MCD on 'Rubber Chick', not really containing a tune as such rather using melodious bass sounds and the programming to take the track through its paces. Being even more bizarre, the limping gate of beats and fractured structure of 'alice' is melded with a peculiarly vocalised and computer-treated French accented female voice. Track 3 'zickzack' is credited as being created only by James Plotkin, opting for a cut up experimental collage, ranging from crystalline textures to tonal outbursts and quite similar to various Mego artists. 'The nine' runs the straight edge of all track that precede it via using dense up-tempo styled beats and lashing bass guitar driven rhythms, creating one of the more user friendly compositions of the MCD. At over 5 minutes it is one of the longer tracks, using its timeframe to morph off on tangents while still retaining a common theme of a darkened electronica groove. 'Psalm 66' from its outset contains dense bass reverberations, distant guitar riffs, building atmospherically echoed drum percussion and some understated female vocals. Basically of all the pieces of the MCD this is the track the best suits the cover art that depicts a number of wave/ surfer images, particularly due to the guitars accommodating a jangly tone associated with instrumental surf inspired music. Final track 'Nebula' despite being too short, is a rather a spacious and minimalist drone piece reflecting its title with occasional vocal snippets added for good measure. Whilst this is an interestingly complex and intricately produced recording, I am also of the opinion that this is almost too diverse for its own good. I guess this must be one of the difficulties of having 5 people collaborate on a project, whilst only recording an EP's worth of material.

Troum (Ger) "Framapeis/ Var 12" ep 2000 Moloko

Although representing my first introduction to Troum, I am aware that this is the project of one Stefan Knappe of Drone Records and Meeror Tri fame. Containing a shimmering crystalline resonance, 'Framapeis' gradually envelops the room, with sweeping and subdued harmonics. Gently the atmospheres are pushed in more areas of louder volumes that coincides with the increasing intensity of the tonal shifts. Late in the track things become quite heavy on the rhythmic side, accommodating a rather crushing echoed tone, marking a much heavier drone aesthetic for the remainder of the track. 'VAF' on the other hand is more focused and intense from the outset, with grinding drones, and assorted attacking noise layers. Due to the faster pace it is able to generate an atmospheric and inwardly swirling vortex, thus creating a track that becomes tighter and more enveloping as it progresses, achieving a comparable sound to that of Yen Pox (incidentally of which an upcoming album sees these two groups collaborating). Anyway in terms of this track, I guess that drone works don't come any more sophisticated than this. Given these two tracks were recorded back in 1997 & 1998, I am very interested to hear what Troum have been producing on more recent offerings and particularly the above mentioned collaboration.

Various Artists (Wid) "deafness is not a gift" CD 2001 Deafborn Records

Picking a selection of (clearly) noise oriented artists, Deafborn Records have produced a premier themed compilation, with the quote of the cover expanding on this topic. *"those who are unwilling to listen are not much better off than the deaf"*. With all track contributions being exclusive, it ensures that interest in this should be at peak level. Reminding me somewhat of the style & focus of StateArt's: How Terrorists Kill compilation, one should really have an appreciation of hectic noise and power electronics to tackle this (or certainly be willing to subject yourself to some rather ear chattering and brain numbing compositions). Gazzodio introduce the compilation clearly spelling out its focus with an all out punishment of atmospheric noise melding partial structure into the chaos as the metallic percussion forges forward (with select noise layers following suit and overall reminding me of Stratvm Terror's noisiest pieces). On 'bilaterally unwanted', Grunt showcases a sustained high end noise approach with an underbelly of weighty distortion that is certainly focused, if not a touch one dimensional. Regardless, the blistering noise, throbbing dissonant structure and vocals presented as expulsions of violent static certainly ensures Rectal Surgery's track is worthy of a particular and individual mention. At the quieter end (and to provide just a hint of respite), Anemone Tube's track starts off with a lower key approach having a touch of a death industrial framework with distortion static emassing in the background that gradually crawls towards the foreground - achieving submission through a subversive approach. Continuing on (and being far from subversive), the Death Squad track is a fantastic freeform & chaotic yet atmospheric piece that uses prominent screamed and further distorted vocals (that is certainly reminiscent of the Con-Dom or Grey Wolves approach). Despite this compilation being mastered VERY loud, somehow Macronympha (the American noise specialist) manages to be even louder than most, with a partly fragmented piece of metallic/electronic oriented noisecscape. DL on the other hand creates an aura of a slightly more experimental noise aesthetic with some choppy, some atmospheric sounds along with wavering short band radio scanning elements (yet it is the sporadic moaning of a distant human voice that is a bizarre and slightly unnerving addition). Einleitungszeit is a fierce beast to contend with due to high end piecing distortion writhing above a dense and slow metallic percussive base. Working both on structured and freeform levels, the vocals meld into the mix sometimes providing focus but mostly adding to the sonic chaos. Left handed decision's piece contains a hint of rhythmic structure with the mid ranged rumbling static affair, but does not progress terribly far as the piece is less than three minutes in length. Admittedly Salon contribution stands out more than most, mainly as they are much more subdued starting with slow tonal shifts of sound and far off noise, building further with blasts of crunchy static (nice!). The final track on this compilation is offered up by Skalpell, presenting a track of noisy dark ambience generated via pulsating undercurrents inter-spread with freeform static, dialogue samples and a cyclic tune that certainly ensures 'purgatorium' is a memorable conclusion. Without having made reference to all tracks, other pieces are presented by Narbenerode, Murnau, Ikkarah, Government Alpha & Mourmansk150 which take this 16 track compilation up to a play time just shy of 75 minutes. A release that your ear specialist is highly unlikely to recommend (unless to first dislodge that nasty wax build up!).

Various Artists (Ita) "Death Odors" CD 2000 Slaughter Productions

I am not going to undertake a proper review of this, given it is limited re-pressing of a much sought after cult compilation. If anything, this 'review' is a reminder call to those who after missing it the first time around, might still be looking for a copy. Issued as the first CD release for Slaughter Productions back in 1994 in a 1000 copy edition (until this point S.P had been operating solely as a tape label), this item has almost become a cult classic, that also spawned the successful follow up Death Odours II CD of 1997. Many of the names on this compilation are now cult classics in their own right, including the likes of Megaptera, Raison D'être & Archon Satani, with many of remaining acts likewise being well recognised (such as: Innana, Atom Infant Incubator, Runes Order, Aio Die, Alerseelen, Con Sono and Grey Wolves). For those interested take heed of this message and do not miss out on this second opportunity given this re-release is in an edition of a mere 500 copies.

Various Artists (USA) "Middle Pillar Presents: BUTOH - The Dance of Darkness" CD 2000 Middle Pillar Presents

BUTOH is a compilation whose main theme pertains around the aural exploration of Japanese dance theatre, and each of the featured artists have presented tracks that interpret this 'dance of darkness'. A short segment of tribal drumming and fractured noise loops (by Kobe) introduces the proceedings, followed quickly by A Murder of Angels with a cinematic yet nightmare inducing soundscape (liquidous shimmering sounds, discordant bell chimes, factory loops, forlorn chants constitute the mix). The scoring female vocals and beat-oriented track by Mors Syphilitica encompasses an ethereal flair due to the melody and style, with the following track by The Machine in the Garden also having an ethereal element, but one that is generated through more gothic programmed means. On 'Chrysalis' The Unquiet Void truly astounds with an engulfing peek into the expansive depths of cinematic dark ambience. Here the depth and breadth of sound sucks you into its vortex, as the percussive elements become an increasing focal point as time elapses. Sumerland, a male vocal/piano-oriented ethereal project, present a entitled track 'Morpheus' that, apart from the main mentioned elements, utilises keyboard backings, percussion, etc. to build its brooding mood. A Murder of Angels impress yet again on 'Vesel of the Incubi', which interestingly moves away from the strictly dark ambience of the first track towards a heavier reliance on percussion with each of the sound elements being blended perfectly. The gothic oriented style of Wench's track does not really catch my ear positively, yet this has more to do with my own musical preferences. This also partly extends to the second track by The Machine in the Garden and the remix track by The Mirror Reveals, due to the heavy reliance on what I consider to be somewhat cheesy keyboard programming. Not to be marred by these, Thread presents a quite bizarre electronic piece consisting of beats, programming and soundscape elements. Zoar opts for a quirky mixture of dark keyboard melodies and industrial beats (that lean towards a dance style), but actually manage to pull this off quite well by not going overboard with the beat programming whilst including a few subdued guitar riffs that follow the main melody. The Unquiet Void have also been given the opportunity to present two pieces, and their second track is a remix of a track from the project's debut album. Static glitches and disembodied voices float over the original track, which has also undergone some slight cut-up treatment whilst retaining its sweeping cinematic dark ambient aura. Being introduced by Kobe, the compilation is likewise closed by another tribal percussive piece that has been further treated with industrial noise loops. Judging from the intro/outro by Kobe, it would be quite interesting to see what the group would sound like if the tracks were longer than the 1-2 minutes presented here. As with all Middle Pillar releases, the CD is housed in a stunning card fold out cover.

Various Artists (Swe) "Nihil" DxLP 2000 Cold Meat Industry

This double LP collection spotlights four of Sweden's most virulent practitioners of fiery, agitated noise, kind of a more concentrated extension of the ideals and abusive agenda featured on the double CD, Esthetics Of Cruelty compilation from 1999. Each of the four participants is given one side upon which to convey their own special brand of noise. IRM get things rolling with the molten stomp and shimmering feedback squeal of 'The Cult Of The Young Man.' Through a mouthful of highly processed, phlegm-coated vocals, the track continues along thematically similar terrain as the brilliant Oedipus Dethroned CD: self-destruction through Christ. Each of the five tracks meticulously winds lurching rhythms through fields of flesh stretched taut and awaiting autopsy, a self-dissection sliced by scalpels of intense vocals spewing concentrated streams of rage. It is a cacophony of hyper-focused, all-encompassing hatred, of God and self! 'Euphoria (Rebirth)' wraps things up with a ferocious battery of noise that tumbles like boulders of compressed bone, beating on vocals that urge one into a loop of self-immolation. The IRM side is worth the price of admission; I'm in firm belief that they are one of the best power electronics bands around! Catching my breath... and on to side two. Institut gets positively explosive as the white noise (sunami that is 'Autohypocrisy' clatters and crashes maniacally. Through clenched teeth windstorms, Institut batter an array of found sounds into a screech, ratchet and clamor assimilation of absolute chaos; they sound like the pissed of half-brother of Dissecting Table. Probably the best track yet by Institut, who apply a more skittish, scratchy, shuffling rhythmic approach to their lone other track (more in line with the material on their debut CD, Great Day To Get Even). A looped pigging clut introduces one to Nod's contributions on side three. Of course, this amusing pretext is buried beneath a barrage of combustible noise, bent on brutalizing through sheer force and monolithic heft. Synths wage battle in the background, adding an almost melodic texture, while vocals psychotically rant amidst the reverberant clutter. A female recites the strange tale of 'The Girl And The Giant,' a fairy tale told amidst exhaling noise that becomes (once again) melodic and distorted towards the end. Very odd! There is much variety to the Nod tracks, including everything from reverberant noise to a storyteller's approach to lyric recitation. Intriguing. IRM side-project, Sharon's Last Party, wrap things up with six incendiary tracks of crackling, distortion frosted noise (well, five, as 'Love Never Ends' is just a quirky song filled with... love, a snippet, a sample, from another era). 'When Love Came To Your House' ripples with streamers of feedback that fall like shards of metallic conflict; an uproarious wave of noise and incensed vocals spill forth, a convulsive, rusted din that plays the eardrums. 'Never Learned To Love You' is adorned in machinery ground static that percolates below vocals seeking those who understand that 'Submission is a gift,' sonically submitting to the pounding away of the percussion. Four sides of impressive power electronics noise, though it must be noted (again) that the price of admission is paid back with interest during the phenomenal IRM side. -JC Smith

Various Artists (Wid) "Salvation Bloodletting" CD 2001 Live Bait Recording Foundation

Some quite positive recommendations were forthcoming regarding this religious dogma themed compilation even prior to it being released, and when after perusing who is featured, I can see why. Featuring many up and coming projects, including many from the American scene (9 of the 14 projects are from America) it a positively collated collection of dark ambient, death industrial oriented tracks. Being one of the more senior projects of the compilation, Amon get things started with a densely heavy dark ambient movement of low end shifting atmospherics (and anyone who has heard Amon before should know the high quality of material to expect). Baal/Berith is up next and appears to be a live collaboration between Baal and Murderous Vision. Their track 'Cecoliah Blood Cult' presents a collage of deep drawn out sounds that contains quite a sharp and metallic resonance - solidifying into an increasingly urgent composition with the incorporation of a tribal percussive element. The Hollowing on their track also take on a percussive sound by presenting a bizarre amalgam of tribal chants, ridging and incessant pounding beats, noise and horn blasts etc. that is as if you have been transported to deep within the jungles of South America to witness the rituals of a cannibal cult. No Festival of Light feature their track 'The Onomako Brush' (lifted from their latest CD 'If God Lived on Earth we Would Break His Windows'), and is basically a great piece of rousing tribal percussion and subdued undercurrent of ambience. Origami Arktika mark a shift away the tribal percussive sounds with a mid volume piece of droning and aquatic sounding dark ambience that becomes quite complex via multi layering technique including elements that appear to have derived from environmental recordings. Being the first recording I have heard from German project Azoikum 'Mein Ist Die Rache' is a great track of tense death industrial proportions, where repeated radio voices (speaking on religious themes) alongside gruff distorted vocals are mixed into a throbbing a spiralling mass of blunted noise textures). Rising French project Nothys Filivs Mortis create a monumental death ambient track of cavernous and

resonating textures. Catastrophic in pace, blasphemous choirs chant in the background, whilst scattered voices puncture the dense mass of sound that forges forward with sound elements converging into increasing structure (and this track certainly gives Megaptera a run for their money!). Deison's track is somewhat subdued when compared to the tracks on their recent 'Dirty Blind Vortex' CD - with the piece crawling along with sustained drones and dense programming to introduce a morbid chopsticks styled keyboard tune mid way through. Nothing being a project name I am aware of, 'Self Spiller' is however my first introduction to their actual music. Representing a great track, it incorporates an unusual blend of dark electronica and death industrial programming, to create a mid paced heavy percussive piece. Slowvent add further weight to the American 'noise ambient' sound via a track that I might just have mistaken for a Grimsplatter piece if I weren't closely following the play list! Static dilled and bass heavy, Slowvent's track shifts along with distortional weight in a partially structured rumbling mass of speaker imploding intensity. Gruntsplatter up next opt to infuse a power electronics aesthetic into their noise ambient sound. With higher end static noise over a hefty slab of bass sound, it is the perfect counterpart to present some sickly screamed and distorted vocals. Building in intensity throughout, it morphs through a muffled sound, finally arriving a much clearer but no less harsh production. In Death's Threes amaze with their piece 'Slay the Savior' which is a massive sounding death industrial piece. Noisy yet highly atmospheric it shifts through free form structure like a cadaver lost and ambulating through the catacombs. Raven's Bane present a louder and noisier track when referencing their recent CDR (also on Live Bait) particularly due to the use of a much more forceful structure whipped into a swirling mass. Leithandeddecision tackles final piece of the compilation. A bulldozing number of grinding distortion that might just contain some sampled voices somewhere under all those crunchy textures! This is without doubt a strong compilation from start to finish which both points to the quality of material submitted and in which the play order that it has been compiled.

Various Artists (Wid) "Ten Years of Madness: Behind the Iron Curtain" 2xCD 2000 Achtung Baby!

With the variety of cult acts on here this double CD compilation will not need much talking up to sell its limited pressing of 1000 copies (some of those names being: Inade, Turbunt Sturmwerk, Der Blutharsch, Blood Axis, Ostara, Novy Svet, Les Joyaux de la Princesse etc). Essentially this is a celebration and document of the first 10 years of the Achtung Baby! web site that operates out of Russia and focusing on post-industrial and related music styles. It seems that there was an earlier version of this compilation including a few different tracks was released on double cassette. However as far as I am aware it was not widely available and may have only been distributed amongst the featured artists. Anyway, with this version of the compilation including the input of Sanctum, First Law, Skrol, Dissecting Table, Cyclotimia, Troum, Dream into Dust, Ataraxia (amongst many others and having a total of 27 artists in all), it is a classic collection of artists and their individual works that ensures an extremely diverse, yet well conceived and executed compilation. Housed in an oversized A5 card sleeve, the 16 black pages (with silver print) contains imagery for each group (along with basic project information) and other text and pictures associated with the compilations theme. Recommended.

Various Artists (Wid) "The Pact....of the Gods" CD 2000 Fremdheit (via Tesco Distribution)

Being a sister compilation to the recently re-released compilation "The Pact: Flying in the Face", this CD covers tracks from quite a few well-known suspects of the neo-folk movement. The late William Burroughs, who (along with Ian Read) was partly responsible for the original compilation idea, introduces the CD at the commencement of the rousing apocalyptic folk number by Changes. With intricate acoustic guitar strummings and commanding vocals singing about the world's impending demise, the short length (a mere two minutes) of 'Waiting for the Fall' does not do justice to the fantastic atmosphere evoked. This is followed by Der Blutharsch, where Albin and entourage present a quality martial/ritual percussive-type track that nevertheless doesn't break new ground for the group. The Fire+Ice track is another fantastic apocalyptic folk piece with the morose vocals of Ian Read embellished by bodhran percussion, violin and acoustic guitar. The Ataraxia track contains a similar feel to the preceding Fire+Ice piece; yet the multi-layered vocals (ranging from spoken to operatic) of Francesca Nicoli are the real gem here and even call to mind Alzabeth's vocal vocals in the now defunct The Moon Lay Hidden Beneath a Cloud. Allerseen surprises with a piece of slow and heavy percussion and looped violin melodies (in amongst various other sound elements), which is followed by In Gowan Ring tackling a traditional folk piece, 'The Rolling of the Stones', thus evoking a gentle folksy aura that gradually builds to a jig. The prominence of the female vocals

on Camerata Mediolanense's track, which sound quite like those of Francesca Nicoli, makes me wonder whether this is an Ataraxia side project - and the track itself is a live recording of massively martial oriented percussion with keyboard and melody encompassing the tune. The quite stunning brooding soundscape of 'Der Gefallene Engel' by Blood Axis (which previously appeared on the "Saturn Gnosis" 2 x 10" compilation) is included here, and while I would have preferred to hear more new material, I have been placated by its sheer quality. Shinnig Vni is up next, and their sound differs significantly to what they displayed on the split CD with Knefeladder - here the track encompasses an organ dirge with other random scaping sounds and deep ritual percussive throbs. The start of the Mee track is quite impressive with strained and emotive female vocals, however as things progress the vocals become increasingly over the top that just don't sit well with me. Not to be fazed by this, the following intricate and introspective acoustics and lone male vocals (sung exclusively in German) of Forseti work particularly well when embellished by flute, cello and bodhran percussion. Ostara are likewise featured here, having lifted a track from the "Secret Homeland" album - this composition, 'The Reckoning', is a fantastically romantic celebratory waltz. Markus Wolff's project, Waldtafel (assisted by Michael Moynihan and Annabel Lee of Blood Axis), tender an aggressive folksy piece of driving percussion and booming vocals while layered violins direct the tune. David Lee's 1 minute piece is more of a spoken word track with some keyboard noodlings, and the compilation is finally closed by the Australian group Bestianity, who present a very aggressive soundscape of various loops, spliced vocals and freeform drum kit percussion. The number of well recognised names on the compilation should be reason enough to obtain a copy.

Various Artists (Aust) "Wo Die Wilden Kerle Wohnen" 7" ep 2000 Rauhnacht

Representing a release on a new and quite obscure sub label of WKN/ Hau Ruk (Albin Julius's label) this is a 4 track compilation of Austrian artists (namely: Allerseen Allgren, Der Blutharsch and Novy Svet), and with the title translating roughly to 'where the wild things are' this partly explains the more avant-garde and playful nature of each of the bands offerings. To also tie in with the title, the cover depicts 4 mini-bike riders wearing masks associated with the mythical creature Krampus. Allerseen, are up first with a rhythmic marching soundscape piece that actually reminds me of a couple of Deutsch Nepal tracks off their 'deflagrations of hell' CD (however the female vocals do give this piece a sense of consistency to other Allerseen pieces). Built around a constant mid paced beat, chimed tune and noise loops, the vocals are presented in a layered guise to create a hypnotic track. Allgren being a group that I am not familiar with, present their track as an interesting piece of sound and rhythmic experiments to create an off kilter aura. Moving on to side 2, I have never really agreed with the description of Der Blutharsch's songs as being 'kinky military music', yet this describes this particular track perfectly, given the playful organ tunes sitting in amongst the looped and heavily rhythmic marching chimes and beats. Fleeting violins and vocals appear but do not distract the focus off the heavy percussion that remains the focal point throughout. The Novy Svet track does its best to be even more bizarre than normal, with their track - a slow and plodding tuba and accordion driven tune, underscored with deep percussion and the trademark morose male vocals (and every time I hear this track I can't help but picture a procession of elephants!). If you have any interest in the featured artists, this a decent time to track down.

Vedisi (USA) "Architects and Murders" CD 2000 Dragon Flight Recordings

In what I believe is the debut album for Vedisi, dense industrial cacophony is ritualistically toyed with in a brooding and harsh manner, so much so that on several occasions I found myself making comparisons to Stratvm Terror (particularly the 'Pain Implantations' CD). Outbursts of static shards are spat from the speakers, occasionally becoming so blisteringly loud that it almost constitutes a fierce noiserelease - as is evident during various points on the first track 'Enord, as gfit'. The second track, 'Mercurious Apex - Blue Psyche', holds an underscore of slightly symphonic keyboard tone accentuating the grinding mid to low ranged textures that build and multiply to static fury, while later simmering down to a very nice section of rhythmic pulses and catatonic keyboard melodies. Some aspects of this release have me somewhat convinced that the individuals involved in this project may have something to do with the metal scene, however I have difficulty in putting my finger on specific elements (maybe the occasional screeched vocal is somewhat of a start). This is not to say that this sounds like a metal album at all, rather in stylistic terms it sounds akin to how someone accustomed to playing metal would approach a dark industrial release. This is by no means a criticism, but merely an observation about how one genre may influence the product of another. Anyway, having made reference to the vocals, it is on tracks like 'Where Duspen Sky Failed and Gurdjiff Fleed' that the vocals unfortunately jar against the dark ritual pulses and venting of sonic fissures, creating a somewhat distracting element. Regardless, the album strides onward, continuing with the grandiosely

titled 'A Sword into a Cup, as Seven Insects Proclaim', which contains both brooding ritualistic percussion and subdued symphonic textures that again morph into screaming washes of static (here the vocals are given the full static work over and fit in quite well). The final track, the fantastically entitled 'Driven East Like Another's Menace', is the most fragile composition on offer, commencing with very subdued low clangs, far off voices and sweeping sounds that all give rise to a very cavernous sound, whilst sections of barely discernable morose keyboard melodies add to the aura (the keyboard segment gradually gives rise to more classically inspired sounds that likewise beg a partial comparison to Caul). Towards the final third, bludgeoning feedback commences its gradual obliteration of the composition, akin to the sound of metallic maggots as they bore into the sonic tapestry. The music on this very active CD is not content to stay in one place for long, instead choosing to tangent off from the main themes of the tracks, particularly since the five compositions range in length from 7 to 16 minutes. With this relatively new label having dredged the American underground, thus far they have unearthed a number of decent releases. This is certainly one of them.

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Darrin Verhagen (Aus) "Hydra" CD 2000 Dorobo Limited Editions

With what seems to be a constant demand for Darrin to produce the soundtracks for experimental dance theatre, "Hydra" is another such release based around a water-themed dance production by the Chunky Moves collective. Despite the dance side of things containing the prior mentioned water theme, the soundscapes presented are actually sharp and clinical experimental electronics. Also the label contains a warning that the CD "contains traces elements of soft ash", which refers to one of Darrin's earlier solo experimental soundworks released with the "Soft Ash" title - snippets from this can be occasionally identified. The first track, 'Prelude', contains acoustic/glacial type reverberations with fleeting radio voices gradually building the track to a heightened point of all-out chaos by solidifying other electronic static and sonar sonics. Track 2, 'Carnage', is simply that, with its massive static over-driven rhythmic electronic mayhem and heaps of left field improvised noise to keep you on your toes. 'Aftermath' calms proceedings considerably by slipping into an introspective track of subsonic isolationist musings, and is akin to listening to a rumbling thunderstorm far off in the distance. A fleeting orchestral string melody seeps into this piece to create quite a stunning apocalyptic feel quite reminiscent of the quieter tracks of Shinjuku Thief's 'The Witch Hammer' CD (another of Darrin's projects, if you were not aware); yet the incorporation of more modern rhythmic production in the track's last segment partially negates this earlier comparison. 'Sirens' reverts to the deep electronic soundscape and radio voice type format before bridging into the final piece, 'Seduction: Asphyxia', that is a lengthy excursion into dark ambient territory with suffocating drones and the occasional blip of a submarine's sonar. Within this piece's framework static and subtle glitch cut-up elements become more prominent as time passes, including prominent telegraph wire generated textures (Alan Lamb is credited for the use of these samples from his stunning "Night Passage" Album, which is also on Dorobo). All in all this is an engrossing and suffocating conclusion to the CD. Given that I missed the actual stage show to which this soundtrack relates (and that the CD contains very little of what one might envisage being used by a dance company), I am now very intrigued to what the performance would have encompassed. Regardless, the beauty of this CD is such that it can stand on its own as a cutting-edge soundtrack, independent of the original context for which it was commissioned. Lastly, the cover image sums up the aura of the music perfectly - a body floating face down in perfectly still water, with ripples emanating only from the point where the body has just submerged below the surface...

Vox Barbara (USA) "(De)constructing Ghosts" CDR 2000 Little Man Records

Having no success in finding a label willing to release Vox Barbara's second album (now this is a situation that I can't really understand), Frank Smith of the project has pressed and released this via his own label (as was the circumstance with the first album). Limited to an edition of a mere 200, the handmade origami-styled packaging is a novel and eye-catching way to present the release, including a sleeve insert containing extensive notes on the background to the recording. As for that concept, the basic premise of the album centres around the use of illegal software that supposedly has the ability to tap into and isolate historical sound energy that is believed to be encoded within all sound waves emitted. Various sound sources, field recordings and other aural scraps were fed through the software to arrive at a sound palate that was altered only slightly through looping, layering and collation to arrive at the final product. Less organic and tribal than the first album, this CD is a mechanical blend of experimental dark ambient with noisy electronic overtones. The first two tracks play up these two angles, the first being a static-induced surging loop (akin what I would expect a binary code to sound like), the second with a low pulse rumbling off into the far distance with a minimal grinding loop sneaking in from an oblique angle. 'Ritual Dissection' runs the gamut of spare dark ambient, but is better described as a field recording captured in the hull of a monolithic rusting tanker. The depth of this track is quite breathtaking, yet essentially subdued, with a multitude of sound fragments being the subtext of the whole. The metallic scrapings, cluttered bass tones and indecipherable voices of 'Liver Dance' give way to a loose machine loop, with the following piece 'Artificial Curiosities' again seeing the appearance of the voices that are mutilated in a humming sonic mass (additionally a segment of fantastic tensile ambience breaks forth for the remainder of the track). The spinning vortex of 'Perforation Bits' rotates into a dizzying mass of droning textures - both relaxed and evasive, concluding with sharp static feedback to further scrape your raw eardrums. 'Silicon Phantom' is yet another pearl, mixing (again) sharp static and glitch oriented loops with warm throbbing drones. The metallic and highly rhythmic percussion of 'Tabernacle Mirror' harks back to the tribal aura of the first album, with a lone chanted vocal further embellishing this reference. 'Theatre of the Uninhabited' returns to darker, more drawn-out territory to see the album to its end - the shimmering bleakness made all the darker with tribal ritual hand percussion. Disembodied voices fleetingly appear to inject an air of urgency during the last minutes of the album. I can say that there are few if any artists that produce works comparable to Vox Barbara's sound, which is surely a compliment when considering the multitude of underground projects that have a similar style and direction. It is a shame that an artist with such a focussed vision for creating albums of world class material has thus far been denied an official release other than on his own label.

Wilt (USA) "the black box aesthetic: zeitgeist movement 1" CD 2001 the Rectrix

One characteristic thread that appears to tie together the relevantly sparse American underground scene is that of a slighter nosier aesthetic, with Wilt being no exception. Despite working within the realms of sparse resonating dark ambient, Wilt's compositions contain a sharp distortion edge evident from the opening track ('opening the black box') that sees dense keyboard melodies soaked with inky noise. This introductory perception is not lost on the remaining tracks that span almost the entire CD format (over 70 minutes), with the 17 compositions ranging from short pieces of under 2 minutes up to the 9 minute mark at the longest. Metallic clangs and bamboo wind chimes add a surreal edge to the windswept sound of 'searching for a corner', while 'nothing is exact not even nothingness' is a more weighty and densely liquidous sounding isolationist piece. 'Containment of aluminium and stone' uses a framework of echoed metallic clatter to create slightly chaotic reverberations whilst containing a vague direction and focus. On the other hand 'approaching singularity' is a more atmospheric piece that uses a hefty low-end bass tone to amass the piece into veritable representation of a black hole at work. Although less than two minutes 'static trench' uses its short span to attempt to implode the speakers with low end choppy frequencies, with my sound system being more than thankful once this track has played out to its conclusion. 'Arabidopsis: seedlings in culture' reveals a sinister edge to the subdued drone frequencies, that gradually reveals others layers of scattered sounds that revolve in loose framework patterns, building continually to increased noise intensity over its length. 'Thermodynamic equilibrium' builds its blazing noise intensity that in full flight could easily constitute a power electronics piece if it weren't for the lack of vocals, with the following piece 'sculpture of rust' also holding the sharper edge of static frequency yet melding it with cyclic drones to rather atmospheric result. Sinking back into dense, subdued isolationist mold 'expansion of consciousness' the rotating singular drone ebbs the piece forward, adding further tonal drones along the way. To bring the album full circle, keyboard melodies are to be found on the short piece 'closing the black box' where it should be noted that apart from the intro and outro pieces, there is little (if any) tuneful or melodic elements throughout the vast majority of the album, rather concentrating on the manipulation tone and frequency. With regard to packaging the card gatefold cover is likewise a nice addition for the visual side of the music's aesthetic via bleak, yet non-descript images. Diverse and engaging Wilt are one emerging project to keep an eye on, particularly as they have two upcoming releases on both Crionic Mind and new label AdNoiseam.

LAST MINUTE ARRIVALS: NEW/UPCOMING RELEASES ON L.S.D. ORGANISATION

Just as I was going to print, a batch of new items and advance releases from L.S.D. Organisation arrived in the post, and after a quick perusal it was evident that they all certainly warranted some sort of a mention in this issue. Likewise if 2000 was the year that this new label started to generate a lot of positive interest, I'll be damned if they're not making a bid for world domination in 2001! Just read the following to see what is out and what is upcoming!

As for the official releases these include:

Puissance (Swe) "Genocide" 7" 2000 L.S.D. Organisation

Packaging: Sepia toned clear vinyl and card cover, with postcards, insets and screen printed cloth bag. Music: The two trademark and well worn sounds of Puissance are showcased here with 1 side of the neo-classical/ orchestral style and 1 side of brooding industrial ambience. As strong as anything they have released before.

Edition: 300 copies.

Cloma (Fin) "Provokaattori" 7" 2001 L.S.D. Organisation

Packaging: Clear red vinyl, full colour card cover, postcard and screen printed cloth bag. Music: Oppressive industrial noise/ ambience (with samples) plays out on one track and rhythmic industrial on the other, both forming a solid and intriguing introduction to this project. Edition: 300 copies.

As for the upcoming releases these include:

IRM (Swe) "Four studies for a crucifixion" 2 x 7" 2001 L.S.D. Organisation

Packaging: 1 x solid yellow vinyl & 1 x solid red vinyl, (both with gloss colour covers), full colour 8 page booklet, 4 x colour postcards, 2 x screen printed cloth bag, 4 x buttons, poster, t-shirt, all housed in a wooden box (5 different types of boxes limited to 100 each).

Music: IRM just keeping getting stronger. Massively brooding power electronics pieces, which sees their sound becoming slower, heavier and even more intense. With their trademark vocals included on 3 of the 4 tracks, most interestingly 2 of the pieces see the use of chimes and trumpet wailings! More amazing & brilliant material from these relative newcomers. Edition: 500.

Iron Justice (Swe) "Post" 2x7" 2001 L.S.D. Organisation

Packaging: 2 x vinyl, black and white 8 page booklet, 4 x black and white postcards, 2 x screen printed cloth bag, 2 x posters, 4 x buttons, t-shirt, wooden box with metal logo (250 x white box, 250 x black box).

Music: Stepping away from their pure power electronics/ noise approach of their debut 7" and LP, this new material sees the group morphing their sound into a pounding metallic (read: machine gun!) rhythmic framework yet still including harsh screamed/ distorted vocal attacks. Without totally forsaking their harsh power electronics sound, this is easily the best material I have heard from these two guys.

Edition: 500.

NOD (Swe) "The story of the three little pigs and the big bad wolf" 2001 4 x 7" L.S.D. Organisation

Packaging: 1 x navy vinyl, 1 x coffee vinyl, 1 x red vinyl, 1 x green vinyl, colour poster, 4 x buttons, 4 x colour postcards, full colour 8 page booklet, t-shirt, 4 x cloth bags, wooden box with metal logo (boxes presented in 1 of 4 different colours).

Music: Many facets of sound and approach are showcased by this project including:- Deep industrial/ power electronics musings (where on 1 track this is offset against the reading of the above fairy tale):- pummelling rhythmic industrial/ noise with aggressive spoken/ shouted vocals:- subdued soundscapes (with on track using female sung and spoken vocals):- various mixtures of the above elements, etc. Diverse and certainly intriguing from another former 'Esthetics of Cruelty' compilation artist!

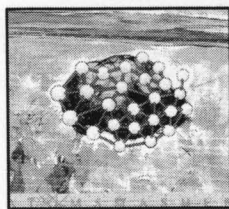
Edition: 500.

In wrapping up this miniature spotlight (in lieu of full reviews of each release) other items to look out for from L.S.D. Organisation in 2001 include: vinyl releases from Ah Cama Sotz, Slogun and Merzbow. Considering that everything I have seen coming from this label is executed with extreme precision & attention to the finest detail, this year will surely solidify L.S.D. Organisation as the new IT label (which is more than warranted in my eyes).

".....and as I stood and watched the glowing embers of the fires, and breathed the hot gas of deciduous death, it seemed I could taste the very end of everything....."

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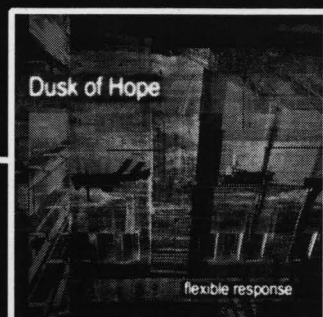
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